SKULL HEAD THE TERRIBLE

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

$1.75

SKULL HEAD THE TERRIBLE

By James Willard Schultz

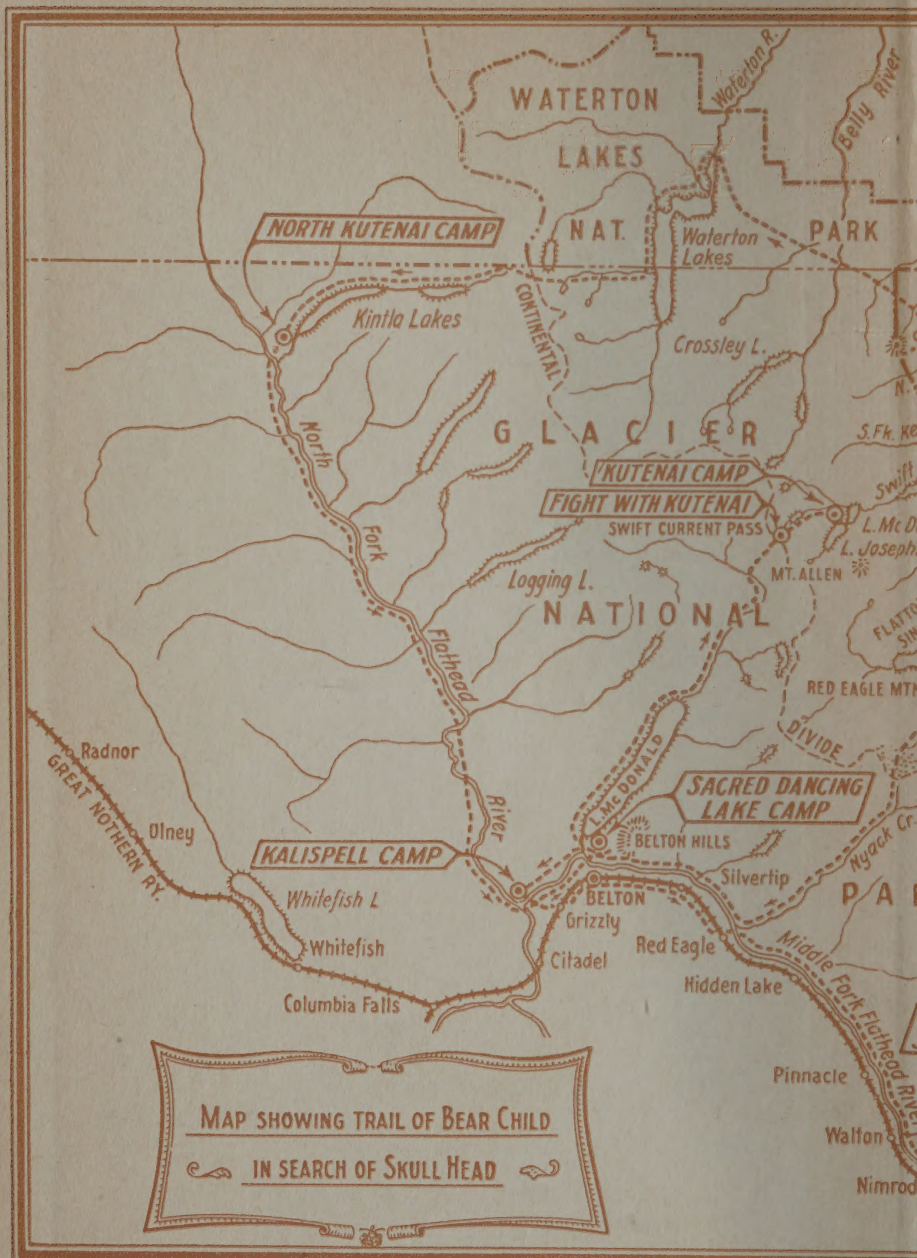
BEAR Child is a young, unproven warrior of the Pikuni, a tribe of Indians living in Montana. Strange news comes from a neighboring tribe of a lone enemy who has attacked and killed two of their people. And each time the body was found pierced with a coup stick tipped with bear fur. Then Bear Child's own father is slain.

Bear Child vows not to rest till he has avenged him. He follows Skull Head, the murderer, into the wilderness, tracking him relentlessly for many months, and in the end he overtakes him.

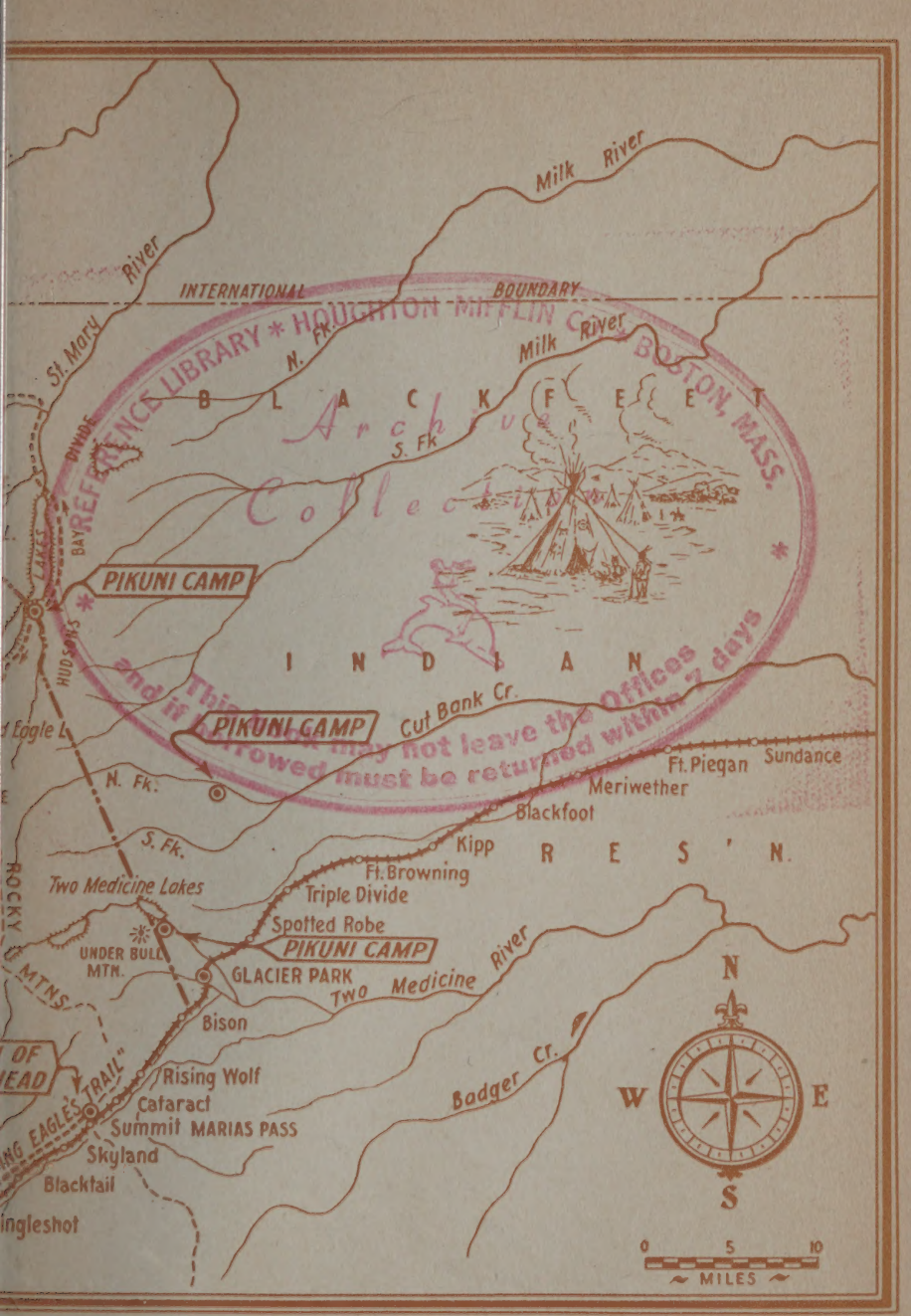
Illustrated by F. R. Schoonover

SKULL HEAD THE TERRIBLE

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ



MAP SHOWING TRAIL OF BEAR CHILD
IN SEARCH OF SKULL HEAD



REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. BOSTON, MASS.
Archive Collection
This book may not leave the Offices and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

SKULL HEAD THE TERRIBLE

I GOT OUT MY FAR-SEEING INSTRUMENT AND WITH IT COUNTED THEM (*page* 64)

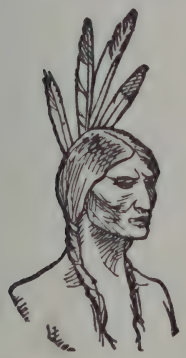
SKULL HEAD THE TERRIBLE

BY

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

FRANK E. SCHOONOVER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1929

COPYRIGHT, 1929, BY THE SPRAGUE PUBLISHING COMPANY,
PUBLISHER OF THE AMERICAN BOY
COPYRIGHT, 1929, BY JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO REPRODUCE
THIS BOOK OR PARTS THEREOF IN ANY FORM

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

CONTENTS

I.	The Mysterious Killer	1
II.	Skull Head Again Counts Coup	24
III.	On the Trail	49
IV.	The Ku-te-nais' Camp	69
V.	Lying in Wait for Skull Head	88
VI.	The Camp at Jealous Women's Lake	108
VII.	Escape of Skull Head	127
VIII.	Skull Head Again Appears	147
IX.	In the Kal'i-spel Camp	168
X.	The End of the Trail	189

ILLUSTRATIONS

I GOT OUT MY FAR-SEEING INSTRUMENT AND WITH IT COUNTED THEM *Frontispiece*

FOUR MEN APPEARED IN THE UPPER REACH OF THE TRAIL 72

SO WENT TO THE SANDHILLS THE SHADOW OF THREE FEATHERS 142

A BLANKET-WRAPPED MAN ENTERED WITH GUN IN HAND 190

SKULL HEAD THE TERRIBLE

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERIOUS KILLER

THAT summer, when, for the first time, a fire-boat came to Many Houses (Fort Benton, Montana), the Pi-ku'ni were there encamped and awaiting its arrival; for the shelves of the trade-room in Many Houses were bare, and we were greatly in need of the goods that the boat was bringing, and for which we were to exchange our winter catches of beaver and other furs, our hundreds and hundreds of soft-tanned buffalo robes. We were then, as we ever had been, the largest of the three tribes of our language; next in size were the Kai'na (Bloods), and the smallest, the Sik-si-ka' (Blackfeet). We numbered six hundred lodges (about three thousand people). Why, from Many Houses, our great camp extended down the bottom to its very end!

My father, Lone Man, was chief of the Small Robes, the largest band of our tribe. He

was a great warrior and very rich: his band of horses numbered more than two hundred; his lodge was one of the largest in the whole camp, and was well furnished. My mother, Slender Woman, was one of the most beautiful women of our tribe, and as good as she was beautiful. She hated war. For the poor, the sick, the widows and orphans, she had great pity. She was a sacred woman: five different times she had been the leader of the women who, in the Berries-Ripe Moon of every summer, gave Sun the great lodge that they had vowed they would build for him. This summer she was to lead in the building of Sun's lodge; she had promised him that she would do it if he would cure me of a terrible sickness that had come upon me in the middle of the winter. At this time, I was eighteen winters of age. I still bore the name that had been given me at birth, Bear Child. I considered it an unlucky name: the Sun priest who had so named me had been unfortunate in all that he did; in wars with the enemy, he had been twice wounded; one of his sons had been killed in battle, and another had died of a wasting sickness; and finally, when running buffalo, he himself had fallen from his horse and been trampled to death by the

hooves of a wounded bull. I was now, and had been for some time, eager to go to war and count several good coups upon the enemy, so that our chiefs would give me a new and perhaps more fortunate name. My father was willing that I should do this; he even said that it was time for me to take to the war-trail; at first, of course, as the servant of some powerful and successful leader of war-parties, who would teach me the ways of war. But to this my mother made great objection: I was too young to take to the war-trail; war was cruel, useless; she did not want me ever to go to war; instead of fighting one another, the tribes of the plains and the mountains should get together and make one great and lasting treaty of peace. And, anyhow, she had had a vision about me, she now said. She had, during her sleep, seen her sacred helper, a certain ancient water-animal, that had plainly said to her: 'Keep your son close to you, for you are to have great use for him; you will need his help at a not far-off time.'

At that, my father became greatly worried. What could it be that was going to happen? he wondered. He urged my mother to pray hard for another vision, in which the future would

be made plain to her. He told me that, for the time being, I must not even think of attaching myself to any war-party that might be forming to go against the enemy. The visions of one so sacred, so near to Sun as was my mother, were not to be disregarded.

There came now from the north our brother tribes, the Kai'na and the Sik-si-ka', also eager to trade their furs for the white men's goods. They set up their camps on Milk River (Teton River), just over the ridge from us. A day or two later, our close allies, the Ut-se'na (Gros Ventres), trailed in from the east, and set up their lodges just above Many Houses. We were, truly, a multitude of people awaiting the coming of the fire-boat.

For two winters back, we had not seen the Kai'na, and Sik-si-ka', they having camped and hunted in the far northern part of our country, and there traded with the Red Coats, while we Pi-ku'ni, with the Ut-se'na, had roamed the southern part of it, even to Elk River (Yellowstone River), the northern boundary of the country of the Crow tribes. So now there was much visiting back and forth between all of the tribes of us. Almost daily, I accompanied my father and mother on

their visits to their close friends in the other camps, and they in turn came to smokes and feasts in our lodge; so was it that each tribe learned all that had happened to the other tribes during the two winters back.

The Kai'na had strange news for us; the tale of a lone enemy who, in the previous summer, and again this summer, had done them terrible wrong. They were hunting on Belly River when, so far as they knew, he first entered their camp. There, one dark night, a woman was returning home from a visit to one of her friends. As she neared her lodge, her daughter, within, started to get more firewood from the pile of it outside; and as she thrust aside the door curtain, the bright firelight streamed out and revealed to the mother a robe-wrapped person who was creeping toward the lodge. She got but a glimpse of the person's face, and shrieked as she turned and ran back to a near lodge for protection; for that face was that of a human skull. Yes, noseless it was, and without lips to cover its grinning teeth.

The woman's shrieks aroused the camp; men came running to learn what had happened to her. Crying, shivering, all that she could

say, in answer to their questions, was that she had seen a human skeleton, wrapped in a buffalo robe, on hands and knees creeping toward the doorway of her lodge. Her questioners did not know what to think of this. One of them said that skeletons — ghosts — did not wear robes; another one gave out that most likely she had just imagined she had seen a ghost-person. They told her that she had better go to her lodge; that they would accompany her. They went to it; went in, all of them, and discovered the daughter upon one of the couches, completely covered over with a robe. They drew it off, and she sat up, big-eyed, shivering. She saw her mother and ran to her, crying: 'Mother! Mother! I saw, close outside, a frightful person; on hands and knees before our doorway; his head was a skull!'

Just then, some one outside the lodge, close behind it, shouted: 'Wokihai! You people, come, bring a lighted stick. Here lies a dead man!'

Out they ran, with several firesticks, and discovered that the dead one was New Robe, owner of this lodge. Flat upon his back he lay, blood oozing from a wide cut in his breast;

stuck upright into the ground, close at the side of the body, was a slender stick, to the end of which was bound a small tuft of fur, that of a bear, apparently.

The body of New Robe was carried into the lodge, and while his woman and daughter mourned his end, kind women came and prepared it for burial. And now a man of a near-by lodge discovered that of his buffalo runners, that at set of Sun he had picketed near by, the fastest one was missing. It was plain enough that the skull-headed enemy had first quietly cut the rope of the horse, led it outside the camp circle, and then sneaked back to make his killing. Throughout the camp, until far into the night, there was constant talk about this. Some said that the killer was a ghost. To that the reply was that ghosts did not use knives or other weapons; they killed only by creating some kind of dreadful sickness in the bodies of those they hated. Again, New Robe's woman and daughter must just have imagined that this enemy had a skull head. But who could he be, of what enemy tribe? That coup-stick he had left, a plain, unpainted stick with a tuft of bear fur tied to it — never had one been seen

like it. Daylight came, and the men of the camp rode far and in all directions, in search of the lone killer, but did not find him.

Two moons after this, when the Kai'na were encamped in the Hills-on-Either-Side (Cypress Hills, Alberta), this same enemy entered their camp, killed One Horn, and stole one fast buffalo horse. There was no doubt about the identity of the enemy, for, like New Robe, One Horn had been stabbed in the breast, and beside the body was implanted in the ground a coup-stick tufted with bear fur. It was realized then that this enemy was a very powerful person; that, doubtless, he sneaked upon his victim from behind, with one hand prevented him making any outcry, and with the other hand used his knife. This killing, also, was done before the people had gone to sleep, while they still sat around their lodge-fires, smoking and talking. Again wide search was made for the enemy, and without result. And thereafter, and for a long time, the camp was nightly guarded; women no longer went to visit one another, and after Sun had set, men going here and there carried weapons and constantly looked back over their shoulders. At last, with the arrival of winter, as the

lone enemy had not again entered the camp, it was thought that he would not come again; that probably he had in some way met his death, and the chiefs told the night-watchers that their work was ended.

But this terrible enemy was not dead. In the New-Grass Moon of this summer, the Kai'na moved from the Hills-on-Either-Side, south to the Little River (Milk River), and there again he entered their camp. He came while the people were still awake, took out a fast buffalo horse, and, returning, seized one named Tall Pine, stabbed him to death, and left beside his body another coup-stick, tufted with bear fur. That evening, Tall Pine told his woman that he was to take part in a gambling game in the lodge of one of his friends in the other end of the camp. The game went on and on, as the woman knew by the continuous and pleasant singing of the gamblers. Listening to it, hoping that her man would win, the woman fell asleep. The cold awoke her; the lodge-fire was out; no longer were the gamblers singing. She went outside; in no lodge of the camp was there a fire; the Seven Persons (the constellation of the Great Bear) showed her that morning was near. She shouted her

man's name, calling him again and again to come home, but got no answer. Her cries aroused the people.

A man in a near-by lodge shouted to her, 'Your man was gambling with us; he lost, and left long before the game ended.'

'Then he must be dead! You people, help me look for him!' the woman cried.

The searchers soon found the man, right in the center of the camp, the body already stiffened. At that, Eagle Ribs, head chief of the Kai'na, called the warriors before his lodge and told them that, this time, there must be no waiting for daylight to go in search for the killer. All who had horses tied before their lodges must start out at once. They soon left the camp, some to ride the plain south of the river, some the plain on the north side, others to go up the valley, and down it. They rode far; they rode all that day, and did not even learn in what direction the enemy had gone, after making his killing. Thereafter, by turns, the different bands of the All Friends (secret society of warriors) kept night watch upon the camp.

From that unlucky place on Little River, the Kai'na moved to the Sweetgrass Hills, where

they remained for a time, and then came on and set up their lodges in the valley of Bear River (Marias River), just north of Goosebill Butte. Not long after the tribe made camp there, a man of its Fat Roasters Band, Stiff Arm, rode up the valley to hunt deer, taking with him his son, a boy of twelve winters. Deer were not plentiful, as there had already been a number of hunters up that way. They rode through one after another of the big groves of cottonwood, and at last entered one in which they found fresh tracks of a big buck. Dismounting and tethering their horses, the two began following the trail of the buck. A high point of the plain, rock-walled, jutted out into this grove — wait, I'll mark the shape of it, here upon the ground. There, like that: ∧ Slowly following the trail of the buck, the two came to the lower side of the point, and were rounding its sharp end, when they met a man who was also rounding the point. Tall, heavy-bodied he was, and of frightful appearance: noseless; without lips; part of one cheek gone; teeth whitely gleaming. Like Stiff Arm, he carried, ready to use, an arrow-fitted bow. They shot at one another, and the boy heard his father gasp, saw him falling, an arrow deep

in his breast; he saw, too, that this enemy was aiming another arrow, and he turned and ran. The arrow pierced his left arm; another arrow swished close past his head and struck a tree. The boy ran as he never had in all his life; back down the grove to his horse; quickly he untied its rope, and, mounting, rode out into the open bottom and down the valley, expecting that the terrible man would pursue him upon his father's horse, his dead father's horse. He looked back, and saw that he was alone in the long open bottom. It came to him then that the man had not chased him down the grove to the horses; anyhow, he had not heard or seen him. He went on and on, crying, mourning for his father; overtaking some hunters coming down off the plain, he told them what had happened to his father. One of the hunters broke the arrow in the boy's arm, and drew it out; the point had passed clear through the flesh and lodged against his leather shirt-sleeve. It was a plain, iron-pointed arrow, with no private mark of ownership upon its shaft. Another one of the hunters told the boy to hurry on home and call out that all who could leave camp must hurry up to the grove under the rock point. And at

that, the hunters dropped right there their loads of buffalo meat, and went on up to scout for the enemy.

Kyi! Before Sun passed the middle of the blue, that day, the rock-pointed grove was completely surrounded with the warriors of the Kai'na. On top of the point, at its very end, stood their head chief, Eagle Ribs, looking down upon them. They saw him wave his robe, and at that, shouting a war-song, they all started into the timber, at last to put an end to their terrible enemy, and doubting not that he would kill one or more of them before he could be shot down. Those of them who entered the lower end of the grove soon came upon Stiff Arm's horse, standing right where he had tied it. They wondered why the enemy had not taken it and ridden away? Word of their find went the round of the advancing party; they all went on more slowly, more cautiously, feeling sure that they would soon discover the killer. And then, as they converged upon the foot of the rocky point, they began to have doubts about it. At last they all gathered around the body of Stiff Arm, lying just as he had fallen, except that the arrow that had killed him had been withdrawn from

his breast. He had not been scalped, his bow and arrows had not been taken, his knife was still in its sheath. Stuck into the ground at his side was still another bear-fur-tufted coup-stick! Haiya!

Again this terrible enemy had escaped them. But he had not taken Stiff Arm's horse; he must be in hiding somewhere near, they reasoned. They searched grove after grove of the valley, both above and below the rocky point grove, and found not so much as a footprint of the man.

Kyi! Such was the bad news that the Kai'na gave us. They said, too, that New Robe's widow and daughter had been right about the appearance of the killer; that Stiff Arm's son's description of him proved that his head actually was like a human skull. There was much talk about it in the camps of every tribe of us. Some thought that Skull Head, as the killer was now named, had great power; that he was able to make himself invisible; that, perhaps, he had power so great that arrows and even bullets could not pierce his body.

It was now real summer. The new grass had all but attained its full growth; the birds had hatched their young; the river was swollen

bank-full with the snow-water from the high mountains. We were all of us becoming impatient of the long delay in the coming of the fire-boat. Our chiefs went to Big Knife, chief of Many Houses,[1] about it. He assured them that the fire-boat would soon arrive. They told him that, if it did not come by the end of that moon, they would be obliged to lead their tribes north, to trade with the Red Coats, on Bow River.

For some time watchers had been stationed upon the high bluffs of the river, below our camp. They came hurrying in, one evening, and reported that they had seen, far down the valley, thin columns of smoke rising above the trees, without doubt the smoke of the fire-boat. The good news spread to Many Houses and to all of the camps. Big Knife sent word to the chiefs of all the tribes that, as the fire-boat could not travel in the night, it would not arrive until the following morning, and that they should all come early, to join him in greeting it.

That was a day of happiness, of great excitement (July 2, 1860). Sun was but a little

[1] Andrew Dawson, the last one of the Factors of the American Fur Company.

way up in the blue, when we all, the four tribes of us, men, women, and children, gathered at Many Houses. The chiefs, all of them dressed in their beautiful war-clothes, followed Big Knife out to the bank of the river; on this day, he himself was in his white men's war-costume: blue clothes with shining yellow metal buttons, a knife, as long as my arm, dangling at his side. The chiefs all sat down upon robes which their women spread for them; behind them sat their warriors; and farther in the rear were the women and children. Truly, we were a multitude of people.

We had not long to wait for that which we were so eager to see. Up around the bend came the fire-boat into plain sight, white-painted, rising high above the water, its two black smokes rising high in the blue. Yes! and we could hear its breathing — Whu — whu! Whu — whu! — as it came on up; as though it had eyes, following always the deepest part of the river. And then, lo! up around the bend came another fire-boat! How very glad we were that they were two! Gone now were our fears that Big Knife would not have enough goods to trade for our furs and robes. Coming nearer, the fire-boats whistled loudly; behind

us, the heavy guns in Many Houses answered, and the multitude of us shouted. And then, at last, the fire-boats tied up to the shore, and Big Knife and our chiefs welcomed the men who had brought them up from the far-off country of the whites.[1]

During the whole of that day and until far into the night, all of the whites were busy unloading the fire-boats, and taking the goods into Many Houses, so no trading was done until after the departure of the fire-boats, on the following morning.

The chiefs of the different tribes of us were, of course, the first to trade in their furs and robes. So was it that my father had my mother and me take ours to the Many Houses trade-room before set of Sun that day. We had twenty-seven buffalo cow robes, all of them my mother's fine tanning; sixty-six beaver skins, most of them of my catch; five red fox skins; thirty wolf skins, and six wolverine skins. My father was a very generous man; for himself he took only enough of our furs for a cap-lock gun, some powder, balls, caps, and some

[1] These boats were the Chippewa and the Key West, the first steamboats ever to arrive at Fort Benton, head of navigation of the Missouri River.

tobacco, and right there and then he gave me the flintlock gun that he had bought, two winters before, from the Red Coat traders. And then he told my mother and me to trade the balance of the furs for whatever we wanted of the white men's goods.

'He thinks not of himself, but of your comfort and mine,' my mother whispered to me, and forthwith bought four blankets for him. With the remainder of the furs, we bought for ourselves blankets, red cloth and blue cloth for women's gowns, traps, knives, an axe, awls and needles, two combs, and a little mirror. Loading all these things upon our horses, outside, and very happy over our purchases, we went back to camp. I was more than pleased with the gun that my father had given me. It was a good shooter. It was my first gun. In all the tribes of us, very few of my age were gun-owners. I was very proud of my generous father. Truly, he was a chief.

So many were the people of the four tribes of us that their trade at Many Houses endured for more than ten days. In the mean time, the chiefs of the tribes counselled together, with the result that the Ut-se'na decided to return to the Bear Paw Mountains for the remainder

of the summer, and then winter in the Wolf Mountains (Little Rocky Mountains) and along Big River, close south of them. The Kai'na were to go south as far as Elk River; the Sik-si-ka' decided to return to the northern part of our country; and we, the Pi-ku'ni, were going to camp up along the Backbone (Rocky Mountains), for there beavers were more plentiful and of better and darker fur than in any other part of our great country. Of the four tribes of us, the Pi-ku'ni were real beaver trappers; the others depended more upon tanning buffalo robes, to trade for the white men's goods. When the Kai'na learned that we were to trap up along the Backbone, they warned us to keep sharp watch for Skull Head; they were themselves going south to Elk River, more to escape his undiscoverable night attacks upon them than for the plentitude of buffalo herds down there. They urged that we go with them. Our chief's reply to that was that we felt it our duty to camp and trap up along the Backbone, in order to prevent the West-Side tribes from coming over to hunt upon our buffalo plains. The Kai'na were sufficiently numerous to take our place in keeping the Crows out of the south part of

our country; the Ut-se'na, in the east, would stand off the Cut Throats and Parted Hairs (Assiniboines and Sioux). In the north, the Sik-si-ka' would prevent the Sai'yu (Crees) emerging from their swamps. So was it that we would keep our vast country, our countless herds of buffalo, safe from our many enemies.

We Pi-ku'ni were first to leave Many Houses. The first night out from it, we camped on Milk River; at the Knees,[1] the second night; and on the following day, we arrived at Bear River (Marias River) and set up our lodges in the big bottom just under Sun's Rock.[2]

In that sacred place we built with proper ceremonies the great lodge that my mother and the other two women had promised Sun.[3]

[1] Two small buttes between the Teton River and the Marias River, and about forty-five miles west of Fort Benton.

[2] Medicine Rock Bottom, as the early fur-traders named it, is the bottom on the north side of the river, and the next one above the crossing of the Great Northern Railway. Because of the very light soil of the slope upon which it rests, the rock is gradually slipping downhill, and is therefore believed by the Blackfeet tribes to be a sacred, a Sun's rock. When the recorder of this tale first saw it, in 1878, there were countless offerings of rings, beads, arrows, furs, and wearing apparel upon and around it.

[3] For details of this annual ceremony, see *Sun Woman*, by J. W. Schultz. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Ten nights we remained there, and then, after making two camps, we arrived at the foot of the lower one of the lakes of Two Medicine Lodges River, there to remain for some time, the women to cut the many new lodge-poles that were needed, to gather and dry great store of berries for winter use, and the men to hunt bigheads (bighorns) as well as other kinds of grass-eaters; for so thin and soft and even was bighead leather that it was best of all leathers for men's shirts and leggins, and women's gowns.

As there were now only light summer winds, our great camp circle was located right in the open, bordering the shore of the lake (Lower Two Medicine Lake, Glacier National Park) and the river flowing from it. That evening, just before set of Sun, I went out to the shore of the lake with my father's far-seeing instrument (telescope) and, looking through it, I discovered a band of bigheads on Under Bull Mountain, the mountain that slopes down to the south side of the lake. I decided to start up there at break of day, but told none of my discovery of the animals, and went early to my couch, and slept.

Shouting of men, shrieks of women and

children, awoke us. Naked except for our breech-clouts, my father and I seized our guns, rushed from our lodge, and ran to a crowd of people gathering where our camp circle bordered the river. There in the midst of them, close in front of his lodge, lay Little Owl, dead from a gash in his breast, and men standing around his body were examining a coup-stick that they had plucked from the ground, a bear-furred coup-stick. 'Skull Head! That enemy of the Kai'na! Now he attacks us; he is the killer!' they were saying. I noticed that there was still a fire in the lodge of the dead man, and in other lodges here and there; the night was not far gone.

Came running to us our head chief, Big Lake, asking what had happened. A hundred answered, talking all at once, talking on and on. 'Be silent, all of you!' he shouted. He then questioned the young widow of Little Owl, crying, kneeling there beside her loved one's body. Between sobs that choked her, she said that her man had told her that he would just step out before going to sleep. She had heard no least sound of the attack upon him; after long waiting, she had called to him to return; and, going out to look for him, had

discovered his body, plain there in the shining of Night-Light, right there close in front of his lodge.

Said Big Lake then: 'Surrounded by timber as we are, it is useless to try in the night to find this Skull Head. You men of the All Friends, watch well our camp circle until the light of the new day comes. We will then try to give the killer that which is his due.'

CHAPTER II

SKULL HEAD AGAIN COUNTS COUP

FEW of us, other than the little children, slept during the remainder of that night. In every lodge the fire was kept burning, and the people talked about the silent, powerful, sneaking enemy, and mourned the end of newly married, brave and generous young Little Owl.

Our fast buffalo horses, as usual, had been run in and tethered close to our lodges, at set of Sun. The killer had taken none of them. Came morning, and we went down the valley to our horse herds, grazing in the little prairies; not a single animal of them was missing. Therefore, we reasoned that Skull Head was somewhere near by, intending to make another night killing in our camp. Located as we were, it was useless to try to find him. The mountain slopes to the west and south of us were one great forest; to the east, Big Eye's Ridge was partly timbered, and offered many a safe hiding-place for the man. After our morning meal, while mourning relatives lashed poor

Little Owl's robe-wrapped body in a near cottonwood tree, our chiefs got together to discuss what we now should do. Several of them favored remaining right where we were, our camp and our horse herds to be nightly guarded by the bands of the All Friends Society. Others said that there would also have to be guards for the women while daily they went out to cut new lodge-poles and to gather the great quantities of berries that were needed; that the men would have no time to hunt, and without meat we must starve.

Said Big Lake, finally: 'Here we are, we Pi-ku'ni, the largest, the most powerful tribe of our confederacy. The Crows, the Cut-Throats, the Sai'yu, and all other enemy tribes flee from our approach; and yet here we are, in this rich valley of ours, by one lone enemy prevented from going freely about to do our daily work. It is not safe for any of us to go out alone to hunt, nor can one hunt successfully when constantly fearing the arrow of an unseen, well-hidden enemy such as this Skull Head has proved to be. Nor can we night-watch our camp and herds, day-guard our women, and also hunt. So, let us leave this place of heavy forest and move on to Cutbank

River, where, should this Skull Head trail us, he can find concealment only in the short and narrow groves that border the stream.'

The chief's short speech had instant approval, and the camp crier was told to give notice that we were to move at once. Down came our lodges; the horses were run in, saddles and packs put on, travois loaded, and before middle-day our long caravan was fording the outlet of the lake and trailing up over Big Eye's Ridge. Our chiefs, riding in the lead, again had talk about Skull Head and settled upon a plan by which they hoped to trap him. They sent our camp crier back along the line of us, shouting over and over: 'Listen, you All Friends, you members of its Braves Band, and Seizers Band: As you, one by one, arrive at the crossing of the South Fork of Cutbank River, you will abandon your horses, and, concealing yourselves in the brush, keep close watch for our enemy, Skull Head. Have your women now give you dry meat, pemmican, back-fat, or whatever foods they have, enough for your use for two nights. Yes. There at the crossing, lie you in wait for this enemy, for two nights, if necessary. Pray Sun, as we all shall also pray, that you may there make an end to his trail.'

Following that order, there was much halting along the line of us while women opened packs and travois loads and gave their men the food that they would need. We trailed down into the wide and brushy valley of the South Fork. At its crossing was a fine grove of young cottonwoods with plenty of undergrowth of willows, and there the members of those two bands of the All Friends Society quietly slipped from their horses as one by one they entered it; there stood smiling as they heard our prayers, our words of praise as we passed on along the deep-grooved trail.

Like a huge snake, the long column of us wound up onto the next ridge, and over it down into the narrower valley of Cutbank River, right where the white men's road now crosses it. Not a suitable place for us to camp in at this time; too much timber, too much brush, our chiefs decided, and led us east until we were well beyond the point of pine-grown Cutbank Ridge. There the river ran through a narrow gash in the wide flat plain. We made camp on the edge of the north-side plain. Several herds of buffalo and many bands of antelope were in sight. Near set of Sun, our camp crier announced that, on the morrow,

we were to run a very large herd of buffalo that was then slowly grazing up onto Little River Ridge, to the north of us. Our chiefs also ordered that the All Crazy Dogs and the Raven Carriers Bands of the All Friends, should be our camp watchers for the night.

The night passed quietly. We were all up very early, hoping soon to see our South Fork watchers coming with the scalp of Skull Head. Sun mounted higher and higher into the blue, and still they did not come; so was it that we knew that they had seen nothing of our lone enemy. Leaving the old men to guard camp, we went out to make our run, a great crowd of us upon our swiftest horses, and followed by the women with plenty of pack and travois animals. We discovered the big herd in a place favorable to our near approach, and from the start were right in among them. This was my first buffalo run with a gun, the one that my father had given me. I shot a fat cow, and then found that it was not easy to reload when swiftly riding. Twice I spilled the powder charges that I poured into the palm of my hand. I then thrust the gun under my belt, and, drawing my bow and some arrows, I

managed to kill two more cows before my horse became winded and gave up the chase. I looked back the way we had come: talking, laughing, singing, the hunters and the women were already beginning to butcher the many kills. I hurried to one of mine; my mother came to help me, calling me her good, her sure meat provider. I was very happy.

The day was gone when we returned to camp with our heavy loads of meat and hides. The night was quiet. In the morning came our South Fork watchers and reported that Skull Head had not appeared upon our trail from Two Medicine Lodges Lake. That was bad news. The night-watching of our camp must be kept up by our warrior bands; our women could not cut lodge-poles or gather berries, without protection. We wondered when Skull Head would again sneak in among us. And who could he be? Of what tribe? We little thought that that question was soon to be answered.

On the very next day arrived, with his women and children, Sahta [1] (Other-Side Man),

[1] This was the Sahta who was the guide of Father De Smet. In his journal, the good priest had much to say about the faithful Sahta. He believed that his name was a corrupted form of our word Satan, and claimed that he had converted

half-Pi-ku'ni, half-Flathead (Kal'i-spel), and my mother's very own cousin. We gave him real welcome, for we had not seen him for several winters back, when he had left us to return to his mother's people, with whom we had ever since been at war. He had, he said, become very tired of the West-Side, without buffalo country, with the difficult elk and deer hunting in its great forests, and never wanted to go back there; from this time on, he would live with us, his father's people. He had crossed the Backbone on Running Eagle's Trail [1] and had picked up our trail at Two Medicine Lodges River.

Immediately upon Sahta's arrival, and while his women were putting up his lodge, my father gave a feast and smoke for him in our lodge, to which Big Lake and others of our chiefs were invited. As soon as Sahta had given us his news of the Flatheads and their

him to firm belief in the Christian faith. The recorder of this tale knew Sahta well. He was ever a firm believer in the religion of his father, the Sun religion, and at the time of his death was himself a Sun priest, or so-called medicine man. In his old age, he lived part of the time on the Blackfeet Reservation, Montana, and part of the time on the Flathead Reservation.

[1] Marias Pass, the route of the Great Northern Railway through the Rockies.

country, my father began telling him about our terrible enemy Skull Head, and had no sooner described the man's appearance, as related by the Kai'na, than Sahta exclaimed: 'Why, I know that man; he is a Ku'te-nai. His people call him Cut Nose. Some winters back, he wounded a very large real-bear, and the animal attacked and nearly killed him; so badly bit and clawed him that his head really is like a human skull. He is a man of great strength; terrible meanness; sudden and fearful angers. His own people fear him. His face is so horrible that no woman will become his woman. He has no lodge, makes the lodges of his relatives his home, and, much as they would like to, they dare not put him out. As he has recently been making night-killings of the Kai'na, and now of you Pi-ku'ni, so has he for a long time been doing to the camps of the Crows, the South Big Bellies (Arapahoes), and other tribes of the buffalo plains. He does not always go alone to make his night-killings; because he is so successful, many of his tribe are ever eager to go with him, and he sometimes lets them do so. Those coup-sticks that he leaves beside his killings, the fur that is always tied to them, is the fur of the bear that

attacked him and then died of its wounds. During his long sickness following the attack, Cut Nose had a vision in which some ancient animal appeared, and told him so to use that fur, and he would be ever successful in his raids upon enemy tribes.'

'Ha! So he is a Ku'te-nai, this Skull Head, this sneaking, in-the-night killer! Friends, we have to put an end to him, even though in doing it, we wipe out the whole Ku'te-nai tribe!' Big Lake exclaimed.

'Yes. From now on, instead of raiding this tribe and that tribe of our many enemies, we must war against the Ku'te-nais alone!' cried Little Dog, our war chief, and to that all there present gave quick assent.

A sacred woman, builder of Sun's lodges, it was my mother's privilege to take part in the talks, the councils of chiefs. Said she now: 'In that time back that you all remember, during those winters and summers when we were at peace with the West-Side tribes, how pleasant it was when, crossing the Backbone, they came bearing gifts of dried camas, arrowroot, woven grass baskets and pouches, soft deer leathers, and camped beside us and with us roamed our buffalo plains. Between us and them were

formed close friendships; more than friendships: some of our young men wived some of their young women, and some of their young men wived some of our young women. It was hoped — anyhow, we women prayed for it — that the peace treaties that you chiefs made with those tribes, the Ku'te-nais, the Flatheads, the River People, the Blue Paint People, would never be broken. But they were broken! And by whom? By some of our own warriors, who, not satisfied with their raids upon our enemies of the plains, must needs cross the Backbone and attack the camps of our friends, there summering and gathering great quantities of roots, to share with us. And with what result? Ever since the summer of those raids, continuous war: mourning of widows and the fatherless in all the camps of us. And now you cry out for still more fierce war; against the Ku'te-nais, of all those West-Side tribes, once our closest friends. No! I say, *No!* Instead of doing that, send to them that which will preserve the lives of many of your loved ones, who otherwise must soon die; send them a peace pipe. I know that they will accept it. Let me be the bearer of it. I have no fear ——'

'Woman! Slender woman! Cease talking!' my father interrupted.

Outside, a sad wailing: a voice, rough and hoarse from long wailings for the dead: 'Haiyu! Oh, chiefs! Brave chiefs! Generous chiefs! Pity me! Avenge the killing of my good man!' Young Little Owl's widow it was.

'We hear you: that you ask of us shall be done,' Big Lake shouted to her.

Said Little Dog: 'I will myself lead a war-party against them.'

'My friends, hear me,' said Sahta. 'My advice is that you do as my cousin here, Slender Woman, proposes: Instead of making war upon the Ku'te-nais, send them a peace pipe.'

'You say that because you are yourself on friendly terms with them,' said my father.

'Just see the terrible wrong that they have done the Kai'na and us, in the person of their Skull Head!' cried Iron Necklace.[1]

'The killing of Skull Head would please me as much as it would that poor widow, close there outside,' said Sahta. 'You should never rest until you put an end to that terrible man. But as to warring upon the Ku'te-nais until they are all wiped out, my friends, that cannot

[1] Mikskim = hard rock.

be done. Why? Because they have for their allies the Flatheads, the River People, the Blue Paint People, all of them very bitter against you and your brother tribes of these plains, in that you prevent them from coming over here for meat and hides of the buffalo, and also that your war-parties, summer after summer, attack their hunting camps and raid their horse herds. Right now, more than a hundred lodges of the Flatheads are encamped with the South Ku'te-nais, at Sacred Dancing Lake (Lake McDonald), and at Big Sack Lake (Kintla Lake) are many lodges of River People with the North Ku'te-nais.'

Now, that was something for the council to think about; none spoke for a long time. Said Big Lake, at last: 'Sahta is right: we cannot possibly wipe out those West-Side tribes, located as they are in their country of great forests and cliffed mountains. If only we could catch them out here in the open ——'

'Sahta, in which one of the Ku'te-nai camps are Skull Head's relatives?' my father asked.

'The North Ku'te-nai.'

'And where is that lake that you mentioned, Big Sack Lake? Where is the trail to it?'

'By the trail from Sacred Dancing Lake, up

Liar River (Flathead River), it is two days' ride. Another and better way to it from the plains is by the trail from Little Inside Lake (Waterton Lake, Alberta), across the Backbone; from lake to lake, little more than a day's ride. A long and narrow lake is the West-Side one, the trail running along its north shore; a fine camping place at the foot of it.'

'Ha! I know that lake; led a war-party to it, four summers back. There were twenty lodges of Ku'te-nais at the foot of it. We killed four of the men, and got away with a large band of their horses,' said Red Bird's Tail.

'Yes. I heard about that. Two other men died later of the wounds that you gave them,' said Sahta.

'Haiya! Good! Good!' cried Red Bird's Tail, and sang part of a victory song.

'Sahta, between his raids out here upon our plains, does this Skull Head always live with his North Ku'te-nai relatives?' my father asked.

'Always with them. He never visits the South Ku'te-nais, nor other of the West-Side tribes, because, you see, in his own tribe is a widow he wants for his woman. Always she refuses to set up a lodge with him, but he hopes

on that she will, sometime, change her mind about it.'

'There! I now see how we can make an end to this Skull Head. All we have to do is to go across the Backbone to the camp of his tribe and closely watch until we catch him going to or from it. It might be a long watch, but in the end we should get him,' said Little Dog.

'It would be very difficult to watch a Ku'tenai camp in the way you mention,' Sahta replied. 'Daily, the men scatter out to hunt, and sooner or later they would discover you.'

'For this purpose a large party of us would not do; only a few should go,' said Big Lake.

'Yes. Not more than four of us — sacred number. Well, who are the three who will go with me?' asked Little Dog.

'No! Not you, our war chief. We need you right here with us at this time, when large war-parties of our plains enemies are likely to attempt to raid us,' said Big Lake, and to that there was general assent.

'I will myself take the lead in this!' my father declared. And at that, my mother gave a little cry of pain, and bowed over in her seat.

'And I, knowing the trail to that Big Sack

Lake, will be your guide,' Red Bird's Tail said to him.

Others there in the lodge, and in the crowd outside, listening, at once cried that they wanted to be of the party. Big Lake silenced them.

Said my father: 'For the other two of this party, I ask No Runner and Angry Bull to accompany me.'

'Ai! Go with you I will! That Skull Head, he shall not survive our quest of him!' shouted No Runner, who was of the crowd outside, and who now came in, followed by Angry Bull, equally pleased that he was to be of the party of four. Powerful warriors were both these men, but perhaps not of so much experience as Red Bird's Tail.

There followed much talk about this quest of Skull Head. Sahta was consulted, and he carefully described the location of the North Ku'tenai camp, gave helpful advice as to the way in which it should be approached, and then watched. He believed that Skull Head, satisfied for the time by his killing of Little Owl, must already have started back for his camp by way of Running Eagle's Trail, over which he himself had just come. Yet he advised that

my father travel only at night from Little Inside Lake across the Backbone and on down to Big Sack Lake. Also, it was decided that we should move camp to the Lakes Inside, and that my father and his three men there leave us, to go on north to Little Inside Lake and thence across the Backbone.

As soon as our guests had gone, my mother sadly said to my father: 'You know how great is my desire for peace between us and all other tribes. How could you, then, yourself quickly, eagerly, cry out that you would lead this party against the Ku'te-nais?'

To which my father quietly replied: 'Slender Woman, do have a little sense. Can't you see that, so long as this Skull Head lives, there can be no peace between us and that Other-Side tribe?'

And just then, close before our doorway, again that hoarse and sorrowful voice, this time crying: 'Lone Man! Lone Man! Great chief! Brave chief! The shadow of Little Owl cries out to you! Avenge his death, oh, powerful man of war! Bring to me, his poor widow, the scalp of that Skull Head, that I may paint myself black and dance with it!'

'Hear that!' said my father to my mother.

And then to the one outside: 'We shall do our best for you, oh, poor one. Pray Sun for our success.'

'Ai! Pray I shall and constantly,' the widow replied, and went slowly away, calling over and over the name of her loved dead man.

Said my mother then: 'This, anyhow, promise me: after you have killed that Skull Head, go with me to the Ku'te-nais with a peace-pipe offering.'

'Yes. That I will surely do,' my father quickly answered.

Because of the great amount of meat that had first to be dried, we did not break camp until two mornings later. Then, again following the mountain trail, we crossed the high Real-Ridge,[1] and, descending its partly timbered west-side slope, set up our camp right at the foot of the upper one of the Lakes Inside; right in the big and treeless prairie that runs from its sandy shore down to Real-Ridge Creek. During our remaining nights on Cut-bank River, our night watching had continued, and was here again called out at set of Sun, for it was thought that Skull Head might possibly not yet have gone back across the mountains.

[1] Nit-si' Pahwakwi (Real-Ridge), the Hudson Bay Divide.

Skull Head Again Counts Coup

Again we passed a night of quietness, and with the morning, my father and his three made preparations for leaving us. My mother put up a sweat lodge for them, and Sahta, himself a Sun priest, went into it with them and officiated in their prayers for success in their undertaking. I stood close by with my mother, listening to it all, the powerful prayers, the deep intoned songs to the sky gods, and the Water Ones, most powerful of all those ancient animals which are our helpers. And as I listened, oh, how I wished that I was in there, too, that I was to accompany our four men in their quest of our Skull Head enemy!

When the sweat-lodge ceremony was concluded, I went with my father to the river, while he took the bath that always follows, and during the remainder of the day stayed close at his side; for I was somehow very uneasy about him. So, too, was my mother. Yet we dared not mention our fear that he was going from us, never to return. My mother gave him a belt, beautifully embroidered with quills of various colors, for a Sun offering, and we went with him to the grove along the river, where he hung it in a tree, and prayed Sun to give him success against the

enemy and safe return to us. To my mother and me, night came all too soon, and with heavy hearts we watched him and his three followers leave our lodge and strike off northward into the darkness.

That night also passed without incident, and we all felt that Skull Head really had gone back across the mountains to his people. Yet we were taking no chances with him. Our women went out to cut new lodge-poles, to gather berries, but always under strong guard, and members of the All Friends kept good night watch upon our great camp circle. Food animals of all kinds were everywhere plentiful. I had no trouble in keeping our lodge well supplied with meat. So passed the days. Every night my mother and I prayed for my father's safety; every morning we added a stick to the little pile of them that marked the number of nights of his absence from us.

Said my mother, one morning, as she added another little stick to the pile: 'There. Fifteen nights has your father been gone.'

'Yes. It is not so very far off, that Ku'te-nai camp; he will, perhaps, soon be with us.'

Just as I said that, we heard sudden commotion in the east edge of camp; excited voices,

growing louder and louder, then crying of women. We stepped outside; from all directions the people were hurrying thither, and we went, too. As we joined the crowd, the people made way for us toward its center, regarded us with sad and pitying eyes, and my mother asked: 'What means this? What has happened?'

Answered one: 'Haiya! Something very bad: your man is dead!'

'Oh, no! No!' my mother cried, and pressed on, until there, in the center of the crowd, we came upon No Runner, thin of face, big-eyed, hair unkempt, talking with Big Lake and other chiefs. My mother ran to him, seized hold of him, crying: 'My man! My man! Where is he?'

Sadly, very sadly, No Runner looked at her, and, bowing his head, simply signed, 'Dead!' And at that she dropped right at his feet, and was as though herself also dead. Kind women brought her to life, bore her away, motioning me not to follow. I stood and heard No Runner repeat his tale: Between the summit of the Backbone and Big Sack Lake, my father's little party of four had been surprised by a large number of the Ku'te-nais, led by Skull Head himself, and of the four, No Runner alone

had survived the attack, and at that only by jumping from a cliff down into a tree-top, and then descending it. With the loss of his gun, he had managed to elude the enemy in the dense forest which covered the mountain-side. More he told: of the bravery of my father and Red Bird's Tail and Angry Bull in facing the sudden attack, killed, all three of them before they could reload their guns; he himself, at the time, had been well behind them on the trail, else he would have shared their fate. He had, before he sprang from the cliff, fired at Skull Head and with good aim, and yet had completely failed to hit him. Was it that Skull Head's medicine was so strong that bullets could not pierce his body?

To all that I barely listened. My father was dead! Oh, how that hurt! Never, never again to see him! I grew all hot with anger at that Skull Head. Little Dog was now talking, saying that now he would himself lead a war-party against Skull Head and his tribe. I said to myself: 'No matter how strongly my mother objects to it, I shall be a member of that party!'

I found my mother alone in our lodge; mourning; crying over and over my father's

name. I told her of the war-party that was forming, and that I was going to join it. She did not answer, just kept on mourning.

I went out to learn more about the party, when it would leave, and if afoot or on horseback. Just then arose another great commotion in the east edge of the camp circle, and I ran to learn its cause. Seven young riders were in the center of the crowd, young warriors who, a few days back, had left us with the intention to visit the Ut-se'na, somewhere in the Bear Paws Mountains. Lo! At the foot of the east one of the Sweetgrass Hills, they had discovered a camp of Liars (Crees), all of a hundred lodges of them, busily engaged in killing our buffalo, there in countless herds.

Big Lake at once called a council about this, and I joined the crowd that stood outside his lodge to listen to it. The chiefs were not long coming to a decision about it. Invasion of our country, stealing of our buffalo by the Liars was not to be permitted. Revenge upon Skull Head and his tribe must be postponed. Our camp crier was told to order all but four of the bands of All Friends Society to prepare to set out against the Liars on the following morning, under the leadership of Little Dog himself.

I went home and brooded over this new trouble. I was a member of the Sinopaks (Kit Foxes) Band of the All Friends, the youths' band of the society. Well, I would not go against the Liars at this time: my father's shadow was crying out for revenge. I would at once set out in quest of Skull Head, even though I must go alone against that terrible enemy. But need I go alone? There was my close friend Amunis.[1] Yes, Amunis would likely go with me. I hurried to his lodge, called him out, and whispered: 'I am going across the Backbone, to try to find and kill that Skull Head. I am going alone unless you will accompany me!'

'Go with you? Of course I will. And you need not whisper about it. No one can prevent me from doing that which I want to do,' he answered.

That was true; he was an orphan; his home the lodge of an uncle. We went into it, and Amunis at once said to the grim warrior: 'Uncle, Bear Child and I are going forth; across the Backbone. That Skull Head, we

[1] Otter. The word really means, *winds hair*. Strips of otter fur were used for winding the ends of the long braids of the hair of the warriors, which was believed to bring good luck, as the otter was one of the sacred animals of the water medicine.

hope to find him, and count coup upon him.'

The uncle eyed Amunis, eyed me; his lips quivered. Said he: 'The greatest coups are not always counted by our greatest warriors. Go, my young ones, go. May Sun protect you.'

I went home to my mother, and told her of my intention; but she was so stricken by her great loss that she appeared not to hear me; just sat there upon her couch, crying over and over my father's name. My grandmother — my father's mother — and several of my aunts were with her. One of the aunts cried out that I was too young, too inexperienced for this undertaking. My grandmother turned upon her fiercely, and told her to close her mouth. She said that, young though I was, it was right that I should attempt to avenge the death of my father; that she would herself at once provide me with the things that I should need for the long trail across the mountains. She hunted about among our belongings, found the right pouch for me to carry, and put into it three pairs of moccasins, awl and sinew thread, red paint, my comb and little mirror, and a bladder of pemmican. I put in my extra gun flints, steel for striking fire, my father's telescope, and I was ready to go.

Meantime, there was great excitement in camp over the preparations of the bands of All Friends to go against the Liars. Amunis joined me, and we watched them mount their fine horses and leave, Little Dog leading, band after band following, all in their beautiful war-clothes, each band singing in turn its war-song to the accompaniment of drums.

At last night came. I tried to comfort my mother, but still she seemed not to be able to realize that I was going in quest of Skull Head. All she could do was to hug me close, and wail over and over my father's name. Amunis was waiting for me. I went out, we mounted the horses that we were to ride on the first part of our trail, left camp, and struck off down the valley.

CHAPTER III

ON THE TRAIL

FROM our camp at the foot of the Upper Inside Lake, Amunis and I followed the great travois trail of our people that then ran northward along the east side of Lower Inside Lake. There was a light wind and we could see its little waves glisten in the shining of Night-Light. As we were passing the pine-grown island that lies not far from this shore, we saw a large animal swimming out to it; a lone buffalo bull, we thought. The swimmer alarmed two big diving birds (loons) and they made great outcries that echoed again and again upon the side of the mountain across from us, Top-is-Flat Mountain. They are very sacred, very powerful, those birds. I prayed them for aid upon our dangerous trail.

A little way below this lake, we crossed its outlet, Many-Chiefs-Gathered River (Saint Mary's River), and, still following the many-furrowed trail, we went on down the valley; across Swift-Running Creek; then Little Swift-Running Creek (Kennedy's Creek), and, leav-

ing the trail, we struck off more to the west. As day drew near, we went into hiding in a grove of pines well up on the south slope of Chief Mountain, and at once we lay down and slept.

Tired though I was, I did not rest well. I had visions of my father; of our close times together. I awoke feeling very sad. It came to me that it was upon the top of this Chief Mountain, most sacred one of all our mountains, that my father had, in his youth, obtained his sacred helper. How often he had told about it. He had carried the skull of a buffalo bull up onto the very top of the mountain, and, using it for a pillow, had lain there for five days and nights, fasting, praying, until, in his sleep in the fifth night, he had obtained that which he sought: a little water animal, a mink, had appeared, and promised to be his faithful helper in all his undertakings. Also, the ancient animal had warned him that, in order to be successful and live to a real old age, there were certain things that he must not do. Just what those things were, my father never told. I thought it likely that he must have failed to observe strictly his helper's warnings, and hence his sudden end.

Thinking about this, I had a sudden desire

to go up to that place of my father's fasting, and Amunis said that we should go up, anyhow, for a view of the country, and to obtain meat of some kind. So, after watering our horses at a little spring and tethering them upon good grass, we began the ascent of the mountain. As you know, the east side of Chief Mountain is a sheer cliff of tremendous height; it can be climbed only from the west, up the long ridge running to its summit. The way was easy enough until we passed above the line of the timber, but from there on it was very steep and in places the climbing dangerous. As we were about to leave the timber, we discovered a small band of bighorns just beyond it, and, sneaking a little nearer to them, I shot one, a two-year male, and quite fat. We butchered it, left the carcass, to take what we wanted of it upon our return, and went on. Sun was past the middle when we at last reached the summit; a quite level space not much larger than the circle of a lodge, and there, just as he had left it in the long-ago time of his youth, we found my father's buffalo skull. The snows of winter and the rains of summer had not completely washed off the stripes and dots of sacred red with which he

had painted it. More than ever then the loss of my father grieved me. I stretched out upon the hard rock summit, pillowed my head upon the skull, and wept. And after a time I made a vow to the ancient animals that I would, later on, return to that very place to fast, and ask for their assistance upon my life's trail. Also, I prayed for their help in my present quest of the Ku'te-nai killer of my people. I then got up and joined Amunis, sitting upon the edge of that tremendous cliff.

Haiya! Never had I thought it possible to see so much country as can be viewed from the top of Chief Mountain. To the east, plain enough were the Sweetgrass Buttes, and farther, and more to the south, were the Bear Paw Mountains, distant all of five days by horseback. And to the south, across Big River, we could even see the blue outline of the Highwood Mountains. Nearer, to the east and the north, plain were the narrow and timbered valleys of some of the branches of the Big River of the North (the Saskatchewan); and near and far, the yellowing plain was black-dotted with herds of buffalo, our plains, our buffalo. How rich were the tribes of us, and our ally, the Ut-se'na!

On the Trail

Sun was low when, with part of the meat that I had killed, we returned to our horses. Quickly then we built a little fire of dry and all but smokeless quaking aspen, broiled and ate some of the fat meat, mounted our horses, and went on; around the foot of the great mountain, and then more westward than northward. So was it that, during the night, we crossed the forks of Rope-Stretched-Across Creek (Lee's Creek), then forded Manifold River (Belly River), and at break of day went into hiding in a grove bordering Fought-the-Ku'te-nais River.

I know not what was the ancient name of this river. In my great-grandfather's time, it was given its present name, following a fight that our Pi-ku'ni tribe had with the Ku'te-nais, near the mouth of the stream.

Again we broiled and ate some of the big-horn meat, and then lay down and slept. Our horses, shrilly neighing, awakened us, and made our hearts beat fast. We sprang up, Amunis stringing his bow, I with ready gun. We heard voices of people, thudding of horses' feet; enemies, we were sure, were coming. Then, just outside the grove, appeared some riders, and at once I recognized one of them,

a big, heavy man, wearing, as always, a cap made of the skin and plumage of a raven, all of it, even the head and the tail. He was White Wolf, chief of a little tribe of mountain people, the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki.[1] More than a hundred winters back, the few lodges of them had come to the three tribes of us, come with peace offerings, and begged for permission to live in a small part of our country; just the Backbone, from Big River of the North south to Point-of-Rocks River.[2] They had promised that they would never fight us, never even attack our lone hunters, and had ever kept their word. They were a people of peace. Their men never went to war; instead of that, they counted coups by their killings of real-bears (grizzly bears).

So was it that, immediately upon recognizing the chief, I shouted his name, asked him to stop, and we stepped out from the timber. He clapped hand to mouth upon seeing us,[3] and said to me in Pi-ku'ni — he spoke it well — 'You! Lone Man's son! Why are you here? Where is your father?'

[1] Saksi-Trying-to-Cut, the Stonie Indians: a very small branch of Assiniboine Sioux, now on a reservation just west of Calgary, Alberta.

[2] Sun River, a tributary of the Missouri.

[3] In the sign language, a gesture of surprise.

'Dead, my father. I seek his killer, on the other side of the Backbone,' I answered.

'Haiya! Gone, that good chief, that generous chief! Gone to the Sandhills! You must tell me all about it. My camp is just above here. You have horses? Come with me to my lodge.'

The chief and his men had been running buffalo, and their women were following them with many pack horses loaded with meat and hides. Amunis and I hurried back to our animals, mounted them, and overtook the chief. It was but a little way up to his camp, and we were soon resting in his very comfortable lodge, eating choice food that his women set before us. Then, his leading men having come in, I told of my father's end; told all about the killings that Skull Head had made, first in the Kai'na camp, and then in ours. When I had finished the tale of it all, the men talked together in their different, and to me very unpronounceable language; and then the chief said to Amunis and me, in our language:

'This Ku'te-nai whom you name Skull Head; his right name is Noseless. We know him, have always known him, for the North Ku'te-nais and I and my people frequently

camp together, even as we at times camp with you Pi-ku'ni and your brother tribes of the plains. Time was when this Skull Head, as you call him, was a good, kind, and quiet man. But after he recovered from his fight with the real-bear, when he saw how the people all avoided him because of his fearful appearance, he became just the other way; his heart is not different from that of a real-bear. He has sudden and frequent angers during which he is just like a mad bear; eager to injure any and all whom he sees. His own relatives fear him. Yet he has a certain following among the members of his tribe, men who, because of his many successes, are eager to go with him upon his war-trails whenever he will permit them to follow his lead. Upon one of his raids against the Kai'na, he camped with us upon his way back across the Backbone; camped in this my lodge; we were then on High River. He told of his night-killings; of his bear-furred coup-sticks that he set in the ground at the side of those whom he stabbed. We liked not his tales; they sickened us, for we are a people of peace. You tribes of the plains and those of the mountains, why don't you make a lasting peace treaty with one another?'

'And then let them swarm out upon our plains and kill off our buffalo herds? That would never do,' I answered.

'There are buffalo enough for all. And even though they would in time become scarce, better that than war, and the mourning of widows and children,' said the chief, and to that, all present gave strong assent.

The chief's talk did not please me. I had intended to ask him to describe fully the trail that we were to follow, up across the Backbone and down to Big Sack Lake, but now I forbore, for I saw that he wanted not to aid me, any more than he did the killer of my father. Further talk we had; about the location of the Kai'na, the Sik-si-ka', Ut-se'na, and my own people, and I told, too, of the arrival of the fire-boats at Many Houses, and the following big trade at that place. The chief then said that, on the following day, he would break camp and go to visit and hunt with my own tribe, for a time. I then mentioned that Little Dog, with all but four of the bands of the All Friends Society, had gone against a camp of Liars that had been discovered camping and killing buffalo in our Sweetgrass Hills. At that the chief shook his head, and exclaimed:

'More fighting; more crying of the fatherless. How wrong; how very wrong!'

By that time I had had enough of such talk. I told Amunis that we should be going. We went out, mounted our horses, and rode on up the valley. A little talk we had about our visit with the chief; we did not think much of him and his people.

Sun was setting when, for the first time in our lives, we arrived at the foot of Little Inside Lake (Waterton Lake), and gazed upon its shining length. Narrow it was and long, running straight south, mountains of great height and wonderful, fierce beauty rising steeply from its shores; some of them supporting great banks of ice, their summits bristling with sharp, needlelike pinnacles; their huge war-bonnets, said Amunis. And here was the Across-the-Backbone Trail, running south along this west side of the lake. That did not seem right, for only by traveling west could we cross the Backbone. Well, it was the only trail in the valley; somewhere up the lake it undoubtedly turned to the west, we thought. Anyhow, we had to follow it. And here began the dangerous part of our undertaking. We might at any time meet a party of the enemy

upon the narrow trail. From here we had to go on foot, slowly, cautiously, all eyes and ears for that which might be ahead — yes, and behind us, too. We took the ropes off our horses — we had come bareback all the way — and they lifted their tails and eagerly set out to return to their mates, at the Lakes Inside. In our war-pouches, still untouched, were our portions of pemmican, enough, perhaps, for three days' food; we had to keep it for a time of real need, and over across, in enemy country, we could build no fires. So was it that we turned into a grove of cottonwoods and willows there at the foot of the lake, gathered a lot of dry bark and fallen branches, and, when night came, cut all of our remaining bighorn meat into thin slices and broiled them hard and crisp for future use. We then lay down and slept until morning, when, after eating sparingly and drinking plenty of water, we climbed to the top of a near-by hill, and in the shelter of some juniper brush, passed the day in watching the valley and the trail running up the lake. Here and there we saw a few old buffalo bulls, elk and deer, bands of bighorn and goats high up on the mountains; but of men no least sign. By turns we slept

again, several times during the day; so was it that, when night came, we were strong to go.

Kyi! We had followed the trail but a little way up the lakeside when we came to a sharp turn that it made, straight west up the narrow valley of a creek running into the lake. There was no doubting that this was the trail running across the Backbone and on down to Big Sack Lake. Confidently we now followed it, but slowly, and oh, so watchful for sight of any moving thing ahead. Now and then we did see that which was neither rocks nor brush; dim shadowy objects blacker than the night, and our hearts beat fast until we made out that they were deer or elk feeding, traveling along the trail. They never kept us long in doubt, however, for upon sight or scent of us, they fled from our approach. It was better and we traveled faster when, after a time, Night-Light appeared and enabled us to see more plainly. We kept watch upon the Seven Persons, swinging around in the northern sky. When they showed that the middle of the night was passed, we came to a lake lying close under steep high slopes that were, we felt sure, the very top of the Backbone. The trail was as

plain as ever. It led us past the lake; through heavy timber up onto a bare, rock slope, and then into a narrow gap between two mountains. Day was near when we arrived at its western end. We stopped right there and rested. The light grew whiter and whiter; day fully came, and we saw mountains after mountains to the west; most of them timbered to their very summits; timbered their slopes and the deep and narrow valleys between them. We had not believed that there could be a country so dark, so heart-saddening, so different from our country of open, sunny plains. Down under us, as far as we could trace its course, the trail wound down from rock shelf to rock shelf of the mountain-side and into the heavy timber below them. It was between us and that timber that my father and Red Bird's Tail and Angry Bull had met their end. I was anxious to find my father's body and cover it safely from the hunger of the wolves and the meat-eaters of the air: the other bodies, too. I sprang up and went hurrying down the trail, Amunis close at my heels. Down and down we went; along steep slopes; close to the edges of high cliffs; and at last into the timber, without having discovered where the Ku'te-

nais had made their surprise attack. It must be, we decided, that the bodies of the three had been tossed from the cliff upon which they had been killed. I felt very badly about our failure to find them. Stronger than ever was my hatred of Skull Head and his kind: they should pay for that they had done, here upon this mountain-side!

We passed this day in the upper edge of the timber, by turns sleeping and watching the trail; no living thing except a lone black bear appeared upon it, and with the coming of night we returned to it and went on down the mountain, and into a narrow valley in which was a swift and roaring stream. Now, right in the enemy country, we traveled more cautiously than ever. We had heard much about the West-Side tribes and their ways. Unlike us of the plains, they ride not out in the morning, many hunters together, to procure meat and return home by set of Sun. No. These West-Side hunters go out singly and on foot, in all directions in the great forest, to trail deer and elk, and are sometimes two or three days in making a killing; all that time sneaking along the game trails; sleeping where night overtakes them. The risk was great that some

of the wandering, out-sleeping hunters would discover us.

Before the Seven Persons marked the middle of the night, we came suddenly out upon the shore of a lake, its north shore, and some distance below its head. From what we had heard Red Bird's Tail tell of this West-Side country, we were sure that this was the Ku'te-nais' Little Sack Lake (Upper Kintla Lake). It was not very large. Night-Light, now risen, enabled us to see its not-far-off head, and foot. And here, for the first time, we discovered horse tracks in the trail. Not fresh, however; at a mud shore of a little creek, they proved to be at least two days old. We made out that two riders — hunters — had come this far up the trail, and then turned back. On the south side of the lake were several very high, ice-banked mountains; it was likely that the hunters had been up on them in quest of goats.

On and on we went, past the lake, down an ever-widening valley, and, not long after the middle of the night, we came to the head of another lake, which was, without doubt, Big Sack Lake (Kintla Lake). Were we near our journey's end? Were the Ku'te-nais still camping at its foot? This was a much longer

lake than the one we had passed, and we soon saw that we could not make the foot of it before day came. In the first faint white light of the new day, we left the trail and the north shore of the lake, and, when well up on the side of a long ridge, we went on in the heavy timber. Day came, Sun appeared, and still we kept our westward way, but very slowly, pausing often to look and listen for signs of the enemy. So was it that, when Sun was well up into the blue, we came to an open rocky cliff-edged outcrop of the ridge, and, creeping out upon it, we looked down into the valley. Haiya! In a small, grassy park, a little way below the foot of the lake, were some lodges. But they were few. I got out my far-seeing instrument and with it counted them; only twenty-eight lodges. I carefully searched the timber surrounding them, but could find no more. Without doubt, the greater part of the North Ku'tenai camp had moved away to some other part of the country; to some place where deer and elk were more plentiful. Still, as Amunis now said, it might be that Skull Head was right down there in one of the lodges of the little camp. Well, we would see. With my far-seeing instrument, I closely watched the camp

and its people. Near enough it was for me to distinguish men from women, yet so far that I could not make out their faces. Little figures were children playing about. A few horses were picketed before the lodges. Two riders arrived, dismounted, and women removed packs from their horses — meat, of course.

We were very hungry; thirsty, too, but there was no water at this end of the ridge. We ate a few mouthfuls of our broiled meat. I handed Amunis my far-seeing instrument, and lay down and slept. Then, when Sun was well past the middle of the blue, he awakened me and I stood watch. Again and again I tried to make out whether one of the men down in that camp was the particular one we were after, Skull Head himself. As the end of the day drew near, I kept close watch for the returning hunters. They came, some of them on horseback, some on foot; some with meat and some without it. Without exception, they entered camp from the upper and the lower ends of the little prairies; without doubt upon the big trail that we had followed.

As Sun was setting, I awakened Amunis, and we backed off the rocky point, went slowly down through the timber, and in the

darkness we came to the foot of the lake and drank, and ate more of our broiled meat. Amunis then proposed that we go right into the enemy camp, peek into the lodges one by one, and, should we discover Skull Head, shoot him, and run for our lives. I thought that would be too dangerous. Until their fires died out, the men would be visiting one another, and so be sure to become suspicious of our movements and question us; and right then would come the end for one or both of us. No, not that. My plan was that we should watch the big valley trail for sight of Skull Head, and shoot him, should he be alone, or with not more than two companions. As the most of the hunters of that day had entered the camp at its lower end, we should begin our watch below it.

Turning from the lake back to the trail, we followed it down, very slowly, frequently pausing, and so came to the upper end of the little park in which the camp was located. Before arriving there, we heard many horses feeding and moving about in the timber, and we passed several that were right in the trail. They were a temptation. Except that our long trail had another object, we should have

rounded up a good band of them and turned back for our plains country as fast as we could go. We now looked out upon the lodges of the camp, all aglow with the evening fires of their occupants. So near were we that we could hear the people talking, laughing; the crying of little children. In one of the lodges was the beating of a drum and singing of some men. A strange song it was, very different from the songs of our people.

Amunis whispered to me: 'See, all of the people are sitting around their fires; let us anyhow peek into two or three of the lodges.'

'No, no. At any time some one may come out: after more firewood; to visit in another lodge, or for some other purpose. Come, let us go,' I answered.

We went down around the camp, into the trail again, and at some distance below, we began to look for a good place from which to watch the trail. But it was too dark to do that, so we sat down and waited for the help of Night-Light. When at last she appeared, we soon found, at the end of a long straight stretch of the trail, a sudden right turn of it where the underbrush was very dense. In that we cleared sufficient space for us to sit, to lie

down, facing the long stretch of the trail, and only about five steps out from the bend of it. We then lay down and slept until break of day, when we ate sparingly, hurried to a near stream and drank, and went back to our watching-place. To make it more secure, we cut quite a lot of brush and interwove it with the growth in front of us, and in such manner that it appeared to have grown there. We then, with ready gun and bow, sat at ease and waited for the hunters to appear.

CHAPTER IV

THE KU-TE-NAIS' CAMP

SUN was up, but the valley still in deep shadow, when the first one of the hunters appeared at the far end of the straight stretch of the trail. He was afoot, coming almost running, his leather wrap thrown over one shoulder. At sight of him our hearts beat fast; we prayed that he might be the man we sought. On and on he came, never pausing, looking neither to the right nor left, only straight ahead; singing something and marking time to it with up-thrusts and down-thrusts of his gun, in the grip of his right hand; and soon we saw that he was of unscarred, good-looking face. Of usual height he was; his hair, combed but unbraided, of no great length. Most noticeable were his legs in their tight-fitting leather leggins; large and round like those of a woman, but of solid hard muscle instead of fat. From constant hunting on foot, climbing steep mountains, all of the West-Side men were so muscled, while we of the plains, hunters on horseback only, had slender legs and small and narrow feet. As he came to the sharp turn in

the trail, the man appeared to be looking right at us in our hiding-place in the brush, yet we knew that he did not see us, had no slight thought that the enemy eyes were staring at him, for he kept right on going, singing, rounded the bend, and passed out of sight around the next turn of the trail.

'Haiya! Not Skull Head!' I whispered to Amunis.

'No. But soon more hunters will be coming; take courage, be patient,' he answered.

One close behind the other, two men came into the straight stretch of the trail, came on at a walk that was almost a run. One carried a gun, the other, bow and arrows. We soon saw that they also had natural faces; sad, stern faces, wrinkled with age; gray their unbraided hair. Enemies though they were, almost I pitied them: old men who should be sitting at ease in their lodges, yet obliged to go out to hunt on foot in their country of few elk and deer. As he was about to make the bend in the trail, the lead one of the two looked straight at our hiding-place, slowed up, almost stopped, then went on again. The rear man spoke to him; he answered, and they both looked back over their shoulders at our screen of brush.

Something was wrong with it. But what? As soon as the two passed out of sight, I crept around upon hands and knees to the front of the brush and examined it: one of our red willow cuttings was misplaced; the butt of it pointed right out at the trail, the fresh, white slicing of the wood plainly showing, as did the light-colored under sides of the leaves. I quickly set the cutting in place, straight up in the mass of the others, and went back. And just in time, for I was no sooner seated than four men appeared in the upper reach of the trail, one of them on horseback, talking loudly, telling something that now and then caused the others to laugh. None of them was Skull Head. They did not so much as glance at our brush screen. But one of them had a gun; the others carried bow and arrows. The rider wore an old and tattered blanket; the three on foot had leather wraps, folded and thrown over their shoulders. They were a poor people, the Ku'te-nais. We of the plains had plenty of blankets, cloth shirts, cloth hats. Our women wore fine gowns of red cloth, and blue cloth. Well, of course we had plenty of buffalo robes with which to buy these and other goods of the white traders.

Next to appear on the trail were a young man and his woman, on foot, traveling fast, and they also went on without looking at our hiding-place. Then came a party of five men, two of them riding; another party of four, afoot; then two riders; and last ones of that morning, a party of seven, three of them riding. In all, twenty-five men, almost the whole number of the men of the little camp, we thought. Eagerly we had watched them as they came on down the trail, hoping that, of each party that appeared, one of them would prove to be the man whom we sought. And now our hearts were low.

Said Amunis, after a time: 'Let us take courage. It may be that Skull Head is one of the few men of the camp whom we have not yet seen. He may be right now resting in it, and, again, he perhaps went up the valley from it, to hunt.'

'Well, we have to make sure about it, and soon, for our food supply is getting low. We will go, right now, and watch for the return of the hunters who went up the valley, this morning,' I answered.

'Dangerous. Some of the hunters may have gone up onto the slopes of the valley; we may

FOUR MEN APPEARED IN THE UPPER REACH OF THE TRAIL

run right into one of them,' Amunis objected.

'We will go very slowly, keep good watch ahead. Come, we start,' I insisted.

Sun was well up into the blue when we left that hiding-place. We crossed the trail, slowly ascended the heavily timbered ridge, went slowly along it, stopping often to look about in all directions, seeing no hunters, no deer or elk, nor even footprints of them. It was but a short distance that we traveled, yet Sun was well down in the blue when we again struck the big trail, a little way above the enemy camp, and quickly we went into hiding in a patch of gray willows, close to it. This was not so good a place as that of the morning, for, looking out from it, we could see but a little way up the trail. We dared not look for a better place; hurriedly we cut some willows and set them up with those in front of us, and at each side, and so made sure that we were well hidden.

Barely had we finished the screen and made ourselves comfortable within it, when we heard horses coming down the trail, and the whacking of quirts upon their sides. They came in sight, five horses, five riders, with hides and meat of goats that they had killed,

and lo! the lead rider was the man we sought — Skull Head himself! Yes, there he was, about to pass us closely, and we dared not shoot him, so many were his followers. Terrible, horrible was the face of the man! Noseless, lipless, almost cheekless, bare teeth grinning, his left eye without lower eyelid. Almost I vomited, so sickening was his face, and at the same time my anger at him, killer of my father, grew within me. He was keeping his horse at a trot, his companions were closely following. Quickly they passed us, and went out of sight down around a bend of the trail.

Amunis and I looked at one another, sank down, suddenly tired, weak. 'Skull Head himself! Oh, how horrible, his face,' said he.

'Yes. But no more horrible than his bad heart. Well, we have seen him, he is here in this camp. Soon shall he pay for that he has done to us, to our brothers, the Kai'na,' I answered.

Night came. We went to the lake, drank plenty of water, ate the last few pieces of our broiled meat, and were still hungry. Remained now only the pemmican that had been given us by our relatives; even eating it very sparingly, it would be finished within three days.

I wondered if we could count coup upon Skull Head within that time. And how should we ever do it if he continued to hunt with several companions? Long we talked about it, there on the shore of the lake. Then we went back to the trail and down it to the edge of the little park in which the camp was located. There in one of its redly glowing lodges was our enemy. Again Amunis urged that we look into one after another of them, find Skull Head, and shoot him where he sat. But, even as he whispered it, one and then another door-flap was raised, and the firelight shining out, revealed men going to visit in other lodges. No, that was too dangerous: I said that we should attempt it only if we failed to get our enemy by watching for him upon the trail.

'But to-day he brought in meat; his companions also. He may not go out to hunt to-morrow; nor the next day; nor the next. And even if he does go, we may not see him; we cannot watch, at the same time, the trail above and the trail below the camp.'

'We must watch them; there is nothing else to do, and pray that he comes our way, alone, or with not more than two other hunters,' I replied.

Further talk we had. I proposed that we go to our good hiding-place below the camp, and there keep watch during the following day, but Amunis said that, as Skull Head and his companions had evidently found plenty of goats somewhere up on the Backbone, they would likely return there for their next hunt. I let him have his way about it, although somehow I strongly felt that we should go below, to our first watching-place.

So was it that we went to our hiding-place above, lay down and slept, and with the first light of new day, we sought and found a better place, at the upper end of a long, straight stretch of the trail, where we quickly built a good screen by adding cuttings to the fairly thick stand of brush. Near by, a little stream ran down the ridge and into the lake. We drank from it, and ate a little of our pemmican, got behind our screen and saw to it that our weapons were in order, ready for use.

Sun came up. The blue was without a cloud. Eagerly we watched for some of the enemy hunters, for Skull Head, to come into the long, straight stretch of the trail. We watched and watched, but none appeared, and, when Sun was well up toward the middle, we felt sure

that none would appear. Either there was no hunting out from camp that day, or the hunters had gone down the valley after meat. Amunis proposed that we go down around the camp to our lower hiding-place, on the chance that we should see, near evening, hunters returning from the big valley to the west; perhaps see Skull Head, and maybe kill him. I didn't want to do that, and strongly objected; it was too risky, that daytime sneaking around the camp. I had fully realized it, the day before, and would not again attempt it.

The day was very hot; swarms of little black flies bit us; we longed for night to come. I was tempted to do as Amunis wanted: in the darkness, go into the camp and try to kill Skull Head in his lodge. At last Sun went down, and the valley began to darken. We were about to go to the little creek to drink, to eat a few mouthfuls of our pemmican, when we discovered men coming down the trail, five men on foot, coming slowly. Not Ku'te-nais, we knew at once, for they one and all wore blankets. They were, of course, a small war-party from the plains. But who could they be? Were they from one of our tribes? Well we knew that parties of Liars, of Cut-Throats,

Parted Hairs, and even the Earth-Houses People sometimes sneaked through our country to cross the Backbone and raid the West-Side tribes. Closely we watched the five; nearer and nearer they came. We thought that we knew them, and soon made sure of it: they were Kai'na; their leader was Owl Body, brother of New Robe, killed by Skull Head.

'Owl Body! Greeting!' I cried, and at the sound of my voice the five flinched, stopping short with ready guns. 'It is us, Pi-ku'ni! Don't shoot!' said Amunis as we sprang up and hurried out around our screen.

'Ha! You, Bear Child! And you, Amunis! We heard that you were over here,' said Owl Body, embracing us, as did the others, one by one. And then he asked: 'Well, how is it? What of Skull Head? Have you seen him?'

'Seen him we have. Yesterday, near evening, he passed down this trail. Four men were with him, so we dared not shoot. But a little way below here is his camp,' I replied.

'Only twenty-eight lodges,' Amunis explained.

'Ha! Only a part of the Ku'te-nai tribe, a small part of it; so much the better. We should

somehow manage to kill this Skull Head, and soon,' said Owl Body.

One of his men said that it was time to eat. We all went to the little creek and sat down. The newcomers had each of them a little broiled meat, and they ate very sparingly of it, as Amunis and I did of our pemmican. Owl Body gave us news of his tribe. After the trade at Many Houses, they had gone south to Other-Side Bear River (Musselshell River), and there, one day, hunters out from camp had discovered a war-party of Crows, nine on foot, and killed them without a single loss of their own number. Soon after that, Owl Body went on, he had had a vision. In a country of heavy forest, where the waters ran toward Sun's going-down place, he had seen enemies, had fought them. And right there his vision had ended. He believed, however, that the meaning of the vision was that he should go across the Backbone in quest of Skull Head, killer of his brother. Anyhow, he had been intending to do that. So, with his four friends, all well mounted, he had set out. At Many Houses they had traded a few beaver skins for a fresh supply of powder and balls. From there, trailing the Pi-ku'ni, they had found

our camp at Lakes Inside, and learned of Skull Head's new killings, of Little Owl, in our camp, of my father and the others, on this Across-the-Backbone Trail. So, pushing on, following Sahta's advice, and hoping to overtake us, they had turned loose their horses at Little Lakes Inside, and come on foot. Like us, they had met the Sak'sis O-ki-tu'ki, and heard nothing from them but talk of peace between all tribes. Up to the time they had left our Pi-ku'ni camp, Little Dog and his All Friends bands had not returned from their Sweetgrass Hills expedition against the Liars.

Further talk we had, and at last we decided upon a plan by which, we felt quite sure, we should soon bring Skull Head to his end. It was that two of Owl Body's men should join Amunis and me in watching for him on the trail above the camp, while Owl Body and the two others watched the trail below it. And to keep in touch with one another, we were all to meet, soon after dark of each night, right where we were then sitting beside the little creek. Owl Body then said that he wanted to see the enemy camp, that we should all go down to it, and asked me to take the lead.

Down past the foot of the lake we went, and

then, as we neared the little open park, I could neither see nor hear the horses that had previously been grazing there in the timber, resting along the trail. I spoke about it, as did Amunis, and Owl Body said that the animals had probably been driven to fresh grazing, below the camp, perhaps across the river. We went on. I led more slowly, and somehow felt uneasy. I stepped over a log that had fallen across the trail, remembered it, and knew that we were but a few steps from the upper edge of the park; that the glowing lodges of the camp should be in sight. But all was darkness out there; and quiet; no least murmur of voices; no singing, drumming, crying of children. A few more steps I made, and saw that the little park was bare. While Amunis and I had kept watch above, our enemies had broken camp and gone down the valley. I said as much to Owl Body, close behind me, and he replied, 'Where they have gone, we can surely follow.'

'Yes. And let us lose no time about it,' said another.

We crossed the park, stopping only to examine one of the abandoned fireplaces; below its fluffy ashes were still a few small, red coals of wood. Camp had been broken, we

thought, not earlier than the middle of the day. The night was so very dark that we could not see the footprints in the trail, could not be sure that our enemies had gone down it. Possibly, we thought, they had gone north, or south, out of the valley. But a little way below the place where Amunis and I had first watched for the passing of the Ku'te-nai hunters, the trail ran along the half-dried mud shore of a small lake, and, kneeling, we fingered the imprints in it of many horses going down; we were right; we had only to keep going down the big trail to find the new location of the camp. Not long after passing the little lake, we heard the roaring of swift running water, and soon came to a river flowing south. It was, without doubt, the Liar River (Flathead River) of which Sahta had told. Somewhere up here was the big camp of North Ku'te-nais and River People (Pend d'Oreilles) and below, at Sacred Dancing Lake (Lake McDonald), two days' ride below, were the South Ku'te-nais and many lodges of Flatheads. Owl Body now said that Sahta had told him also about the location of these tribes, and that he himself, with ten others of the Kai'na, had once raided a camp of Flatheads at Sacred Dancing Lake,

in which they had taken many horses. On raid his party had crossed the Backbone by way of Running Eagle's Trail (Marias Pass).

Right there where the trail struck the river, it crossed to the west side, so we were obliged to take off our clothing and ford its swift current. We then found that the trail joined a much larger trail, running up and down this big wide valley, and the night was still so dark, the ground so hard that, feel about as we would, we could not make out which way had gone the camp that we were following. One of the Kai'na proposed that we build a small fire by which we could quickly decide this, but Owl Body made strong objection to it. We had come too far, and for a purpose too important, for us to take any unavoidable chances of discovery by the enemy, he said, and rightly. So was it that we sat down right there and waited for Night-Light to appear, which she did after a long time, and even then she showed so little of herself that we had great difficulty in making out that the enemy had gone down the trail. We followed, Owl Body in the lead, hoping, all of us, that we should sight their lodges before break of day. That we failed to do, and just before Sun ap-

peared, we went into hiding on the bank of a little creek, in brush from which we could safely watch the trail. The only live thing that passed upon it, during the day, was a lone and lean old wolf, going north.

On the following night, we traveled much faster than we had before, so anxious were we to overtake this small camp before it could join a larger camp of our enemies. We crossed many creeks; the river grew ever larger. Four times we had to ford it, and then, near morning, a fifth time, through water so deep and swift that we were nearly swept off our feet. We had been traveling steadily south, but now, after making this last crossing, the trail turned suddenly to the north, up a narrower valley, and Owl Body said to us over his shoulder that he feared we were heading toward trouble. A little later, in a small grassy opening in the timber, he brought us to a stand, and said: 'My friends, those mountains up there I have seen before; they slope down to Sacred Dancing Lake. We are near the foot of it. I believe that we shall find encamped there the enemies we are following; probably both tribes of the Ku'te-nais, for Sahta told me that at about this time of summer, they gather there

to pray and sacrifice to their gods. My friends, if this be so, we are going to have great difficulty in doing that which we set out to do; we shall have little chance to get at Skull Head where there are so many people, and to make an end of him.'

Said Amunis: 'If I had had my way about it, Skull Head's trail would have ended up at Big Sack Lake, where Bear Child and I discovered his little camp. I urged that we go into it, look into one after another of the lodges, and, finding him, shoot him right where he sat.'

'Haiya, Amunis! You are right! We should have attempted it, dangerous though it would have been. But I thought that we should surely get him by constant watching of the trail. Little did I think that we should not have plenty of time, days and days, to do that,' I replied.

Owl Body slowly shook his head. 'Dangerous, very dangerous it ever is, to attempt a killing right in an enemy camp; as you saw it, you were right in that you did, just watching for him upon the trail,' he said to me.

We went on. Day was breaking. We soon came upon bands of horses in the scattering

timber, and could hear the barking of dogs, farther on. Owl Body halted us, and said: 'We have to hide ourselves and quickly. We will go up onto that mountain-side, to that little, grassy slope upon it, from which we shall be able to see this enemy camp.'

Sun was up when we arrived at the place; it was on the slope of the mountain rising from the east side of the foot of the big lake. From the timber at the upper edge of the grassy slope, we saw not one, but three different camps in the flat just below the lake, each one of at least a hundred lodges. Two of them were, of course, the camps of the two Ku'te-nai tribes, the other one the camp of visitors, Flatheads, River People, perhaps some Blue Paint People, come to look upon the sacred ceremonies of their friends. Now were our hearts truly low. Little chance had we to get at Skull Head, there in one of those three large camps; little chance even to learn in which one of them he was stopping.

Said one of Owl Body's followers, breaking our long silence: 'Well, right now, right here, I give up all hope of killing Skull Head.'

Said another: 'Yes, we may as well go back across the Backbone, return to our people.

But not afoot, no! Let us, to-night, take some of those many horses down there, and strike out across by way of Running Eagle's Trail.'

Said Owl Body: 'No! We did not set out merely to take a number of enemy horses: we came over here in quest of Skull Head, the very worst enemy our three tribes have ever had. He is there in one of those three camps. Dangerous though it will be, we must go down into them, try to find him, and kill him.'

'Owl Body, that is just what I was going to propose,' said I.

'Of course we must go down there and try to find him,' Amunis agreed.

The others said nothing, just stared down at the camps. Owl Body impatiently looked at them, and crossly exclaimed: 'Well, you four, speak!'

'You are our leader; it must be as you decide,' one answered. The others just nodded assent.

CHAPTER V

LYING IN WAIT FOR SKULL HEAD

WE were tired, sleepy, very hungry, and not a mouthful remained of the little food supply that we had each of us brought across the Backbone. Also we were thirsty. I said that I would take the first watch, and the others drew back into the shade of the timber and lay down. With my far-seeing instrument, I watched the movements of the people in the three camps below. From all of them they were flocking to a grassy park at the foot of the lake. There they formed a great circle, and within it men, one after another, counted their coups; that they were doing so, I knew, by their movements, their gestures. One of them, probably, was Skull Head, relating his killing of my father, and other members of our three tribes. I prayed Sun to help me; to help us all, there upon that mountain-side; so to help us that Skull Head would never again count his many coups. All of that morning, the coup-counting continued within the great circle of the people. Came midday, and gladly I turned the watch over to Owl Body and Amunis, who

came out to me and said that they had had sufficient sleep. When I awoke, Sun was near setting. Owl Body's four men were still sleeping. I did not think much of them; they showed not the eagerness to kill our great enemy that they should have had. I went out to the edge of the timber and joined Owl Body and Amunis. They reported that they had seen much coup-counting, and then dancing, in the park at the foot of the lake, and that the people had but now left it and returned to their lodges.

Owl Body's four men awoke, came down and sat beside us. Said one of them: 'I am hungry. In this without-buffalo, almost animalless country we cannot procure food. I propose that we go down to those enemy horses, take as many as we can easily herd along, and cross the Backbone before we starve to death.'

'Go without making any attempt to put an end to Skull Head, now that we are so near him? No!' Owl Body quickly replied.

'We can do nothing without food. We should all of us starve to death before ever we could do anything to Skull Head, located as he is among so many people,' said another one of the four.

'Food you shall have! This night you shall have it!' I angrily told the man, and all looked at me in surprise.

'Bear Child! How could you get it? Be wiser; don't talk so queerly,' Amunis warned me.

'Get it I can, and before the Seven Persons mark the middle of the night. I shall go into one of the lodges down there, and take it,' I answered.

Owl Body smiled. 'Your thought was the same as mine. I was just going to tell it when you spoke,' he said to me. And then went on: 'This is the way I believe it is, down there. This evening, the people of the two Ku'te-nai camps will be giving feasts for their visiting friends, so, until quite late, many of the lodges of the visitors will be unoccupied and without fire. We can easily determine which one of the three is the visitors' camp, and then take from it all the food that we need.'

Amunis clapped hands together and laughed: 'Yes! And the visitors will accuse the Ku'te-nais of taking it,' he said.

Owl Body and I laughed with him, but the four just continued staring down at the camp, their brows wrinkled, their mouths tightly

closed. Then, after a time, one of them said: 'Young Bear Child need not procure food for me. I shall myself get all that I need.'

'Yes,' said another one of them. 'In this, each one of us for himself. And I am terribly thirsty. Come, let us go down to water.'

Said Owl Body: 'Don't be a little child! A little thirst is nothing. We will remain right here until it is dark.'

Now, more than ever, I disliked these four, particularly the one named Four Horns, he who was set to give up all further quest of Skull Head and strike out for home with some of the enemy horses. And in that, the three others were of his mind. Knowing them as he did, I wondered that Owl Body had selected them for this great, most sacred undertaking. They were of small minds. A few horses were more to them than the killing of Skull Head, the meanest single enemy that our three tribes ever had.

Night came at last, and we hurried down through the timber to the lake and drank and drank of its cool water. Said Owl Body then: 'My friends all, this will we do: seek first the camp of the visitors, and take food from it. Then look about in the two Ku'te-nai camps

for Skull Head. O Sun! O powerful traveler of the blue! Pity us! Enable us to put an end to him.'

'Good! Lead on!' said I.

We soon came to the edge of one of the camps. Every one of its lodges was aglow, and within them the people were talking happily; singing to the beat of drums; listening to story-tellers; visiting one another, as we knew by the frequent raising of the door curtains. It was undoubtedly one of the Ku'te-nai camps. We drew back, circled past it to the next camp, which was close to the outlet of the lake, and at once saw that its lodges were also all lit up, that the people within them were having a very happy time. Said Owl Body: 'Undoubtedly this, and the other one that we looked at, are the two Ku'te-nai camps. Just think, my friends, that here close to us, in one or the other of them, is the man we seek. Well, we will go to the third camp, the one below, and if it is as I think, we shall soon take food from it. And then we will come back here and do our best to find our enemy. Come, we go!'

'Which way?' Four Horns asked.

'Down between the camp and the river.'

'We are too many together. Any one out

from the camp would suspect us, question us, and we could not answer. Go, you three, down along the river, and we four will turn back and circle around the other Ku'te-nai camp down to the third camp.'

'I do not like your plan. I think we should keep together,' Owl Body replied.

'No. We four will go by ourselves.'

'As you say; have your way about it; but we must decide upon a meeting-place!'

'Up on the mountain-side, where we were all day.'

'So be it,' Owl Body agreed; and without further talk we parted from the four.

Very slowly, frequently pausing, we went down along the river. Some of the lodges of the camp were so near it that, as we passed them, we could hear the snapping of the sticks upon their fires, hear the people talking as plainly as though we were sitting with them: talk so different from ours: harsh in our ears like the cracking of thin rawhide. And of those we were hearing, one might be the voice of the man we sought. It might be that we were passing our one chance to end his mean life. Worrying thought!

The third camp was quite a way below this

one, and well out from the river. We neared it and saw, as we had believed we should, that some of its many lodges were dark; half of them, at least. And in those that were aglow was quietness: no drumming and singing, no shouting and laughing: only the low murmur of the few people within them; the occasional cry of a little child. Without doubt this was the camp of other tribes people, come to look upon the ceremonies of their Ku'te-nai friends. Slowly, cautiously, we circled down around the camp and up its side farthest from the river. It was located in scattering timber; and in among the lodges, and just without the circle of them, were the horses of these visitors, band after band of them, each in an enclosure of poles and brush. I had often heard about this custom of some of the West-Side tribes, this nightly fencing-in of their horses. Our raiders made great jokes about it. They said that it saved them a lot of trouble; they had only to let down two or three poles to drive off at once a band of the enemy horses.

When we were halfway up this outer side of the camp circle, Owl Body brought us to a stand back of four dark lodges between lighted ones.

'In one of those fireless ones is a good chance for us to take what we need,' he whispered.

'Yes. Let me do it; you two watch,' said I.

'No. I will go in,' said Amunis.

'I first said that I will do it, so it is my right to go,' I insisted.

'You, then, you hard-minded one,' Amunis agreed.

Said Owl Body: 'The dark lodge second from the left lighted lodge seems to be the largest, and is likely the best furnished one of the four. Amunis and I will stand upon either side of it while you go in and try to find what we need. If we see any one coming, we will warn you and you will hurry out. In case we have to separate, you know our meeting-place.'

Slowly, a step at a time, we moved on to the lodge. Some dogs behind it moved out of our way.[1]

We all went on around to the front of the lodge, stood there for some little time, looking,

[1] The old-time Indian dogs, near relatives of the wolf, could not distinguish members of one tribe from another, and to them, anything that an Indian did was perfectly right. On the other hand, they were quick to discover and resent the entrance of a white man into their camp. He had a different, and to them unpleasant, odor, and was therefore an enemy.

listening; then Amunis moved back to the right of it, Owl Body to the other side, and I noiselessly lifted the door-curtain, stepped inside and dropped it behind me, and was at once in intense darkness. If there was meat in the lodge, it would, I knew, thin sheets of it, be hung upon ropings strung above the fireplace. I thrust my gun under my belt so that its stock was close to my right elbow, and then, raising both hands, advanced a step; another step, and touched a rawhide cord, then a sheet of meat, of good size; dry outside, but not yet brittle. I took it off the cord; inside my blanket, belted at my waist and pinned at my neck, was plenty of carrying space. I thrust the meat in at my left side, and felt for more, found it, sheet after sheet, stuffed it in at each side of me until my arms stuck out like the wings of a dancing grouse. And all the time I was smelling something, something good, something that I had somewhere, in some long-ago time, smelled before. Suddenly I remembered: it was the odor of dried, roasted camas. When I was a little boy, Sahta and his women had given us some of the sweet, sticky roots. They had brought them from the West-Side. They said that, every summer, the West-Side tribes

gathered and roasted great quantities of them for winter use. I remembered how I had loved the roots, greedily ate them and cried for more. There were some in this lodge; a quantity of them in a parfleche, one of the grass-woven sacks of these West-Side people. I must have them. I got down upon hands and knees, crept to the left of the fireplace, came to a couch; between it and the next couch back, would be some of the belongings of the occupants. I soon was feeling of them; three grass-woven sacks filled with soft springy things, clothing, no doubt. I crept on toward the rear of the lodge to the next couch, touched its outside rail, again got the odor of the dried camas, stronger this time. It might be, I thought, that the roots were stored at the back of the couch, between it and the pegged-down lodge-skin. I started to creep across it, and put my hand hard down upon the face of a sleeping person, a man, who instantly tried to push me away, felt my gun, and knew that I was an enemy. He yelled and tried to throw himself upon me, but the robe with which he was covered interfered, and I broke loose from his grasp and sprang up, started for the entrance, he after me, yelling louder than ever. I could

not see the entrance, but had good sense of its position, and when I struck the front of the lodge, felt the curtain give. It was a very low and narrow entrance, and I was so bulged with the dry meat, so hampered, too, with my gun crosswise under my belt, that I got no more than head and shoulders through, and stuck there, the man seizing my belt and trying to pull me back, to get good hold of me. I yelled to my companions: 'Help me! Pull me out!' The man was yelling to his people for help; they were answering him, were coming. Owl Body and Amunis seized my arms, pulled hard, yanked me out, and also the man, still hanging to my belt. Owl Body felt him there behind me, struck him with his gun barrel, and must have hit his head, for he suddenly let go of me and was still. By this time men from the lighted lodges were coming close. As I pulled my gun out from under my belt, four of them were revealed by a lighted lodge behind them, and both Owl Body and Amunis shot at them and one fell. I fired at the nearest of the three others, not ten steps off, but could not make out that he was hit. We ran; around back of the lodge and away from the camp, away from the shouting men, the shrieking

women and children, and we were not pursued. Our shots had aroused the other two camps. We could hear a great outcry in them, hear men shouting to one another as they came hurrying toward this camp. We knew that there would be no search made for us until morning, if even then. We circled up around the upper camps to the lake, drank again, and sat down and ate some of the dried meat that I had taken from the enemy lodge. It was elk meat, well streaked with fat. Of its kind, never had we tasted better meat, and there was enough of it, sparingly used, to last all seven of us for three or four days. We wondered where Four Horns and his three were, and if they, too, had managed to take some meat from the enemy camp. Owl Body and Amunis laughed and laughed when I told them of my search for the dried camas, and my surprise when I placed my hand upon the sleeping man. But I could not laugh with them. I still shivered, thinking of my fear of the man when he seized me by my belt, for I had been sure that he was about to plunge a knife into my back. He had, of course, laid it aside when he prepared to sleep.

Day was breaking when, climbing the moun-

tain-side, we returned to our watching-place at the upper edge of the little park. Our four companions were not there, as we expected they would be, and when Sun appeared, and climbed up and up into the blue, and still they did not come, we knew for sure that a band of horses was more to them than vengeance upon our great enemy, Skull Head. Without doubt they were by this time far up on Running Eagle's Trail, heading for the other side of the Backbone and our plains country, riding hard at the heels of a good number of the band that they had taken from one of the enemy camps. We were very angry over their desertion of us, Owl Body very low-hearted about it. Again and again he said: 'They were so eager to come with me in quest of Skull Head! They said that they would do all that they possibly could to help me put an end to him! No doubt a number of the Ku'te-nais are in pursuit; almost I could wish that they overtake them!'

'Yes. And now the people of all three camps down there will be very watchful, will nightly guard their horses for some time, and so make it very dangerous for us to go about among their lodges in search of our big enemy,' I said.

'The man we shot — I wonder if we killed

him, or just wounded him. And that other one of the lodge, think you, Owl Body, that you killed him?' said Amunis.

'I struck with all my strength; he must be dead; also the one shot. Let us anyhow hope that they are finished, and so some little payment for the wrongs that these West-Siders put upon us of the plains,' Owl Body answered.

As on the previous day, we now saw the people of the camps gather in the park at the foot of the lake, and begin their ceremonies, their counting of coups. We were tired, sleepy; we had no fear that any of them would come up where we were, so we lay down and slept until night.

Said Owl Body when we awoke: 'I have been thinking about our situation here, and what we shall do, and this is the way I see it. It would, anyhow, have been very difficult to find Skull Head among so great a number of people as are down there, and now that we have made a killing of at least one of them, and Four Horns and his three have taken some of their horses, they will be very watchful of their camps and herds, and we must keep away from them. But they cannot long remain there; their meat will soon be gone, and they will

have to separate and each tribe of them move off to fresh hunting country. So let us remain right here, resting, watching the camps, eating sparingly of that we have, until they do separate. We will then follow the tribe that goes north, the North Ku'te-nais tribe, of which our great enemy is a member, and, locating it, we will do our best to kill Skull Head when he goes out from the camp to hunt.'

Amunis and I thought that a good plan, the only thing to do, and quickly agreed to it. We then went down to the lake, drank, ate a little of our meat, and remained there until day was near, when we returned to our watching-place upon the mountain-side. That day, the tribes again counted coups, and danced in the park at the foot of the lake. On the following morning, soon after Sun came up, we saw that which made our hearts glad: the lodges of all three camps were being taken down, horses were being packed; the sacred ceremonies of the Ku'te-nais were ended, the tribes were about to separate. Sun was no more than halfway up to the middle, when the people of the lower and then of the outlet camp struck off upon the down-river trail, and a little later, those of the other camp, which we believed were of the

North Ku'te-nai tribe, took to the big trail running up the west side of this Sacred Dancing Lake. We thought this a strange move, as we had believed that all three camps would go down to Liar River, and the North Ku'te-nais there turn up the river. Possibly those now going up the lake were not the north tribe people. Anyhow, as Owl Body said, they were the ones that we must follow. If only we had known the direction that they were to take, we could have hidden close to the trail, and learned for sure if our great enemy was one of their number.

Night had not yet come when, after eating and drinking, we started up that lake shore trail. From the head of the long lake, it ran on up a narrow river valley; here and there in heavy timber, where it was so dark that we were obliged to travel very slowly, just feeling our way along. At last, when day came, while we were still upon the trail, great was our surprise when we saw only very old horse tracks in it: somewhere below, those we followed had turned off it. Back we turned then, running, and soon, to our great relief, came to the branch trail that we should have followed. Right there, with water close at hand, we went

into hiding for the day, for it was the safe thing to do. When night came again, we started out upon this branch trail, running to the north and east up along the side of a very high mountain. We climbed up and up for a long time; then went along the foot of a high cliff that was, we believed, a part of the great Backbone. A little way north of the cliff, the trail suddenly turned to the east, between two snow-covered peaks, and we started down a steep incline. This was the Backbone; we had crossed it, we were upon our own side of it; not far off were our buffalo plains. Ahead of us, somewhere, were our enemies, one tribe of them, and we felt sure that they were the North Ku'te-nais, for Sahta had fully explained to us that their brother tribe, the South Ku'te-nais, never camped and hunted north of Sacred Dancing Lake; that they roamed to the south of it, even to the head streams of Elk River (Yellowstone River). Yes. These people we were now trailing were, of course, moving down to the edge of the plains to kill some of our buffalo. Well, they must pay for it. We would call out the whole number of warriors of our tribe to attack them. But, first, we would watch the trails out from their camp,

for the passing of Skull Head. In that way, we had once seen him; this time, even though he should again have four others with him, we would fight them all, first making sure of him. So thought I, as, pausing, we looked back in the break in the Backbone through which we had come. Close under us, on our right, was a little stream, dripping from a great bank of snow. We wondered whither it ran? Most likely into Cutbank River. Well, the new day would enable us to learn just where we were.

The descent was steep; down into a narrow valley, along a stream of ever-increasing size. We passed a small lake; another one; a third small lake; and then day was near. We left the trail and went up onto the east slope of a mountain on our right. The light grew, revealing a lake close under us, and then the camp of our enemies, at the foot of it.

Said Owl Body: 'Haiya, my young ones! We are not on Cutbank River! That down under us is Jealous Women's Lake!'[1]

[1] Jealous Women's Lake — Lake McDermott — is one of the Swift Current Lakes. The three, then, had recrossed the range by way of Swift Current Pass. The mountain from which they were now looking down upon the lake and camp is Fisher Cap Mountain, Fisher Cap being the name that the Pi-ku'ni, many years ago, gave Dr. George Bird Grinnell, in

'Yes!' 'So it is!' we cried. We had not at once recognized the lake, for we had never looked upon it from its upper side.

Said Amunis: 'My friends! By cutting across, under the north cliff of Flat-Top Mountain, we can, before night, arrive at the foot of Upper Inside Lake and the camp of our people. Let us go, let us hurry there, and get all of our warriors to come up here and fight this enemy tribe.'

'No! Strongly no!' Owl Body replied. 'Should we do that, we could not kill them all, and Skull Head would probably be one of those to get safely away from us. It is best that we do as you and Bear Child did before, watch for him, try to kill him as he goes out to hunt.'

'But from that camp, down there, there are so many ways to go out to hunt: we cannot watch all the trails. Let me, anyhow, go after ten or twelve of our warriors to help us watch for Skull Head to pass.'

'Don't be a little child! Well you know that not twelve, but all of our warriors would come charging up, once we let it be known that

grateful recognition of his valuable services in behalf of the tribe.

this enemy tribe is here. Think how hard we have already worked, and fought, trying to get at this Skull Head. Shall that be for nothing? Shall we let others have this chance here to kill him? No! It is for us; us three only! And if we do succeed in killing him, think, just think, how great will be our names! You, Bear Child, am I not right?'

'Right! Straight your talk! As you say, this chance here, this watching of the trails for Skull Head, must be for us alone.'

'So be it,' Amunis agreed.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAMP AT JEALOUS WOMEN'S LAKE

THE enemy camp was upon a grassy slope running down to the outlet of the lake, Swift-Running Creek. By turns, we examined it with my far-seeing instrument. Smoke had been rising from every lodge with the coming of day, and now we saw that the men were preparing for a very early hunt. Some of the women were also saddling horses, getting ready to go with the men, so we knew that it was to be a buffalo hunt. From the lake down to Many-Chiefs-Gathered River (Saint Mary's River) are many little prairies on the north slope of Swift-Running Creek Valley, that were then much frequented by herds of our buffalo, and thither, of course, these enemy hunters were going. To kill our buffalo! That made us still more angry at them. Well, they should dearly pay for it. We saw the hunters and their women mount and depart, leaving but a few old men, women, and children hungrily to await their return with meat, fat buffalo meat, our meat. We were tired, sleepy,

but were agreed that we must watch the trail below the camp for the return of the hunters. We should thus learn whether Skull Head were one of them, and if so, perhaps, even have good opportunity to kill him. So was it that we hurried down to the foot of the mountain, and then skirted the north shore of the lake, keeping well back in the timber; and so on past the camp on the opposite side of the outlet, where we came into the big valley trail down which the Ku'te-nai hunters had gone. The timber along it was very open, and without underbrush; we went down quite a long way before we found a good place for our purpose, a heavy growth of willows at the crossing of a creek that we then called Weasel Creek. Well you know its present name, my friend![1]

Kyi! There in the willows on the west side of the creek, and a few steps up from the trail, we made for ourselves, with the aid of many cuttings of willows, a thick screen through which to watch for the return of the hunters. We then ate a little of our Ku'te-nai dried meat, after which Owl Body took the first

[1] Appikunny Creek, as it is on the Topographic Map of Glacier National Park. It was named for the recorder of this tale, in 1887, but is misspelled. It is, rightly, Apikuni Creek — Far-off White Robe Creek.

watch of the trail. We were each of us to have a very short sleep. Amunis was next on the watch, and I last. Sun was well past the middle when I awoke them. During his watch, Amunis had heard some shooting, down the valley, about opposite Fighting Bears Lakes, he thought (Sherburne Lakes). If the Ku'te-nai hunters had made their killings that near us, they should soon appear. We saw to it that our weapons were in good order.

But one thing now troubled us. It was that some of the Ku'te-nai hunters might have gone up onto Flat-Top Mountain to hunt bighorns, and at the same time have a look at the country beyond. Only a little way to the south of us it was, the end mountain of the divide between Swift-Running Creek and the Inside Lakes, and from its summit one could plainly see the great camp of our people at the foot of the upper one of the lakes. Were these Ku'te-nais to learn that the whole Pi-ku'ni tribe was that near them, they would back-trail into their West-Side country as fast as they could travel; and then, more hard work for us in our quest of Skull Head. 'O Sun! Pity us! Help us! Give us this day to end the life of our Skull Head enemy! At least give us sight of

him, that we may be sure that he is here, that he is one of these stealers of our buffalo,' Owl Body pleaded, and Amunis and I voiced our approval of his plea.

I got out my far-seeing instrument, and with it discovered three bands of bighorns and three male goats, on Black Eagle Mountain (Mount Allen), straight across the valley, and more bighorns on Little Raven Mountain (Point Mountain). On Fisher Cap Mountain, and upon our way down to this our hiding-place, we had seen many signs of elk and deer. It was no wonder that the Ku'te-nais and other West-Side tribes coveted our country, its countless numbers of buffalo, and all the other animals that were food for man. There came to me what my mother had often said: that there were plenty of food animals upon our plains and in our mountains for all those tribes, and that we should let them live and hunt with us. And I had in that agreed with her. But it had been before Skull Head killed my father. Ha! It was different with me now!

Sun went on and on, was quite low in the west, when we heard some one singing, and then saw two riders coming up the trail. They were an old man and old woman who, follow-

ing the hunters, had been given meat; their horses were loaded with it: sides of ribs; shoulders; the head of a cow buffalo. They were very happy. The old man, in the lead, very old, bent with his many winters, kept raising and lowering his wrinkled hands in time with his song; looking and smiling back at his old woman, and she, returning his smiles, jounced in her saddle, nodding her head, in that way marking time to the song. They forded the creek, and passed on with never a look in our direction.

Said Owl Body: 'The old ones: so poor; so gentle. I could not harm them.'

'No, nor I. May they see many more winters,' said I.

There came next up the trail five men and three women, their horses also loaded with meat and hides; as were several pack horses that the women led. And then, soon after they had passed, a long column of the hunters appeared, closely following one another, some of them with so much meat upon their horses that they were obliged to walk and lead the animals. They had made a big killing of our buffalo. They began passing our hiding-place, and they were many, at least fifty men be-

tween the creek and the bend of the trail below. We felt not a little uneasy, for well we knew that, if by some chance we were to be discovered behind our willow screen, we could not possibly survive their attack upon us. There were some women in the party. As one of them was passing us, leading her horse, its saddle turned, and the whole load of meat upon it thudded to the ground. The woman was angry; she scolded the horse, whipped it with the lead rope, and called for help. Several men began replacing the saddle and load, blocking the trail, and those behind came crowding by on each side of them, those on the upper side so near that we expected one or another of them would ride right in upon us. And then it was that we saw Skull Head coming. Upon a big, black horse. Yes, again we looked upon his horrible, noseless and lipless, and all but fleshless face. Yes, there he was, fording the creek, passing between us and those who were blocking the trail, and we dared make no move to kill him. Oh, but he was a proud one: his horse carried no load of meat other than two buffalo tongues; he had given away the meat and hides of his kills. His gun — I stared at it, and knew it by the

brass tacks that ornamented the stock. It was my father's gun; the one that he had bought at Many Houses, after the coming of the fire-boats. I had seen him, when we were encamped on Cutbank River, hammer the tacks into the stock: a circle of them, symbol of Sun, and below it, seven, for the Seven Persons. Oh, how my anger swelled all hot within me when I recognized the gun, and how hurt I felt that I could not right there kill the man who carried it, that man who had killed my father! Unharmed, he passed on, that Skull Head. The whole procession of hunters and women passed, and I broke down and wept.

'Now! Why the tears?' Owl Body asked.

'That Skull Head! It was my father's gun that he carried! He, and no other Ku'te-nai, killed my father! And close here he passed, and I could not shoot him,' I mourned.

And, patting my shoulder, Owl Body replied: 'Never mind, take courage: Skull Head is here, we have seen him, we will do our utmost this time to put an end to his night stabbings of our people!'

So was it that Owl Body, that kind man, comforted me, wiped away my tears.

We remained there by the creek until night,

trying to decide upon some way to succeed in that we had set out to do. We talked of going right into the camp and shooting him where he sat in one of the lodges, but Owl Body decided that we should not attempt that until all other efforts to get him failed. True, he went on, these hunters had this day made a big killing of Buffalo, but they were different from us; they would not rest after a successful hunt. They knew the great risk they ran in coming over upon our side of the mountains, and they would hunt daily, in order quickly to get all the meat and hides that the horses could carry, and then go back to their West-Side, poor country. So was it that we should have good chance to kill our enemy just by remaining where we were and watching for him to pass upon this down-the-valley trail.

There remained now only a little of our dried meat. We ate part of it, and there were left only a few small pieces for our morning meal. So I proposed that we make an attempt to take more meat from the enemy camp. Owl Body was not in favor of it. We might, he said, again arouse a sleeping man. No, far better that we go hungry than to give the enemy the least cause to suspect our nearness to them.

'But not all of the meat that they packed home is in their lodges; there would not be room for it in them,' I said. 'They arrived in camp quite early, and the women at once began cutting it in sheets to dry. A part of it is strung upon lines outside the lodges; we could take a little here and there, and they would think that it was the work of owls, or some of the tree-climbing animals.'

'We should, anyhow, go up to the camp, scout around it, and possibly we can learn in which of the lodges Skull Head makes his home. That, anyhow, will be worth knowing,' said Amunis.

'As you two say! As you say! Come, let us be upon our way,' Owl Body agreed, and we started up the trail.

A little way below Jealous Women's Lake, there are quite high falls in Swift-Running Creek. We took off our moccasins and leggins, forded the creek close above the falls, put on our things, climbed a steep rocky bank, and were right at the edge of the circle of lodges, all of them set with their backs to the lake. The people within them were having a happy time: feasting upon the meat of our buffalo; bragging about their success in hunting; telling stories; singing. We crept close to a lodge in

which a man was telling a story, a funny story, we knew, for his talk was frequently stopped by the loud laughter of the listeners, deep laughter of a number of men, shrill laughter of several women. Perhaps Skull Head was one of the gathering, I thought. I so much wanted to sneak to the entrance and peek in that the muscles of my body stiffened, hurt me. I started to crawl on to the entrance, but Owl Body, close at my side, put an arm across my shoulders, and held me back. While he still held me, the curtain of the entrance lifted, and a man came out, turned and set the curtain well down in place, turned again and passed so near us that we could have reached out and touched him.

Owl Body whispered to me, and then to Amunis, 'Come, follow me.' We crept back to the edge of the bank, went down it to the creek, and then he said: 'I am displeased. You, Bear Child, think what would have happened if I had not held you back! That coming-out man would have stepped right against you, would probably have seized you! Well, we could have killed him, made our escape, but well you know that we should then have had little chance to get at Skull Head ——'

'You are right; say no more about it,' I broke in.

'You promise, and you, too, Amunis, that you will not try to look into another of the enemy lodges until I give the word? Yes? Well, then, let us go back and find, perhaps, a little meat,' he ended.

Again we climbed the bank, then circled around to the other side of the camp, where, as we had seen, several of the lodges were set near a few small pines. And, sure enough, there upon lines, stretched from tree to tree, we found meat in plenty, cutting after cutting of it hung out to dry.

Owl Body whispered: 'Stand, you two. I alone will do the stealing. No, not stealing, for it is ours, our very own buffalo meat.'

Slowly, then, he left us, and silently, cautiously went from line to line, taking a single cutting here, another one there, until he had enough to last us several days. Returning to us, he led around below the still lively camp and up to the ford and across it, and we were soon back in our watching-place at the little creek, where we at once lay down and slept until the break of another day.

Just as Owl Body had said they would do,

our enemies soon began passing us, upon their way to kill more of our buffalo, somewhere down the valley. And as the first little group of them came in sight, Owl Body laughed and said: 'They have no least thought that Pi-ku'ni eyes are upon them. Each cutting of the meat that I took was where a tree-climber could have got at it.'

First to pass us were four men and two women; then came a large number of men and women, with many extra horses for packing home their kills. After they had gone on came one and another little party of the hunters and their women, talking, singing, looking straight ahead, eager, all of them, to get more of our buffalo. And as each small party appeared in the bend of the trail, we hoped, we prayed that Skull Head would be one of it. Though he should be with quite a number of the hunters, we had decided that we must take great risk: shoot him, and run; across the trail and down into the very thick timber and brush along Swift-Running Creek, and then up into the heavy timber on the slope of Black Eagle Mountain. We believed that our attack would be so sudden and unexpected that we could get safely down into the thick brush and

timber before Skull Head's companions could shoot us. Follow us they could not, upon their horses, and, we believed, they would not dare follow us on foot.

But Skull Head did not appear. Last to pass us were three men, riding swiftly to overtake those ahead, and then no more came. Long, long we sat there, watching the trail above. Sun traveled up and up into the blue, and still he did not come. We knew at last that he was not coming: heavy were our hearts.

'Owl Body, Amunis, we cannot let this day pass without some attempt to make an end of this,' I said.

'My thought is the same as yours,' said Amunis.

We looked expectantly at Owl Body, head down, lips tight shut, staring at the ground. He let out a big breath, straightened up, and said: 'Perhaps we can find some way to get at Horrible Face in the camp, up there. Come, we will have a look at it.'

We went up the valley, keeping well out from the trail, and then sneaked out upon one of the rocky, well-brushed ledges above the foot of the lake. Straight across the outlet was the camp, every one of its lodges in plain sight

from where we sat. I got out my far-seeing instrument, and by turns we used it, trying to find our enemy among the people going here and there about their various occupations. We were so near them that, with my far-seeing instrument, they appeared to be not ten steps from us. None of them was the one we sought. Well, probably he was in his lodge; resting; perhaps planning to make more night-stabbings of our people. One thing we at once realized: so many men still remained in the camp that it would be impossible for us to cross over and attack him in it. All of fifteen men were in sight, and in the lodges were doubtless more. And women — what a lot of them there were! Women were everywhere in the big camp circle: fleshing the hides of the buffalo their men had killed; pegging them out upon the ground to dry; putting more meat cuttings upon the strands of rawhide that they had stretched among the trees. Our buffalo hide! Our buffalo meat!

A man came out from one of the lodges and began shouting something; above the roar of the falls between him and us, we could plainly hear him. He moved out to the center of the camp circle and was soon surrounded by a

number of men, while others then appeared, hurrying from their lodges to join the crowd, each one of them carrying something in his hands or in the crook of his arms: weapons; tanned skins; wearing apparel; bundles of eagle feathers — all kinds of properties. The men formed in two lines, facing one another, and sat down, their women back of them. A man at an end of one of the lines began a song in which all there joined; he rose upon his knees and kept time with the song by bouncing of his body, crossing and recrossing of his hands and arms. Ha! As Owl Body said, just like us, they were playing the hide-the-bone game. We had not thought that other tribes than ours knew it.

I took my far-seeing instrument from Amunis, more plainly to watch the gamblers, and learn just what were the things they staked upon their skill. As I was raising the instrument to my eye, I noticed a man approaching the gamblers, coming from the far side of the camp circle. I leveled the instrument upon him, and lo! he was Skull Head! 'There he is, our enemy!' I cried. 'That one nearing the gamblers! Saw you from which lodge he came?'

'No,' they answered. I did not want to give up the instrument, but let them have it, and each in turn cried out that it was he, Skull Head, as they plainly saw his skeleton face. Yes, there he was, so near, so very near us, and we powerless to do other than sit where we were and watch him, for the gamblers were many, thirty-four in the two lines of them, and a few others, with Skull Head, looking on at the game.

Said Owl Body, after a long look at Skull Head: 'My young ones, not useless have been our prayers: now, at last, I think that we are about to finish that which we set out to do. And in this way: we have only to keep watch on Horrible Face, to learn which one of those lodges is his home; and then, to-night, we will go to it and send his shadow wherever it is that Ku'te-nai shadows go. Yes. We will quietly sneak in the front of his lodge; one of us will suddenly and completely raise its entrance curtain, and the other two will shoot him right where he sits upon his couch.'

'He killed my father! I should be the one to shoot him!' I said.

'Do you forget that he also killed my brother?' asked Owl Body.

Said Amunis: 'Do not argue about it, you

two. You have each lost a near relative by this man; you should together shoot him. I have no gun, only bow and arrows. I will raise the curtain for you.'

Owl Body looked questioningly at me: 'Yes!' I signed.

By turns with my far-seeing instrument, we kept watch upon the gamblers, and Skull Head looking on at the game. After a time, Skull Head took the place of one who ceased playing, having probably lost his all. I had the far-seeing instrument when the change was made, and plainly saw Skull Head stake a blanket, a red blanket, black striped, against a roll of furs, beaver skins, I thought, that the man opposite him set out.

I spoke of it, and Owl Body said: 'May Skull Head lose! If he does, it will be a sign that we shall succeed in our attack upon him to-night.'

Skull Head won! He staked the furs against the loser's shield, and won again! The second time I reported him the winner, Owl Body groaned.

'I don't like that,' he said. 'I just feel that it is a sign that we are not to put an end to Horrible Face, this night.'

'On the other hand, it may mean that he wins now, only to make his big losing to us, later on,' I replied.

Owl Body slowly shook his head, and muttered: 'It means no good for us!'

'But wait; he may lose the next time, and the next ——' I began.

Just then, Skull Head arose, turned his back upon the gamblers, and with his winnings, started off toward the outer side of the camp circle. Closely we watched him, saw him enter a lodge, marked its position: just beyond it was a lone, fire-blackened tree that Thunder Bird had killed.

'There! In that lodge, Skull Head dies tonight!' I said, and felt so good, so sure of it, that I wanted to get up and sing.

Said Owl Body: 'It is not wise to say that anything will surely happen.'

Soon after, the gambling game broke up, and the gamblers went their various ways. Smoke arose from Skull Head's lodge. He came out with a bucket, handed it to a boy, who went to the creek and brought him water. No others came to the lodge or went from it; its other occupants were doubtless on the buffalo hunt. All who remained in the camp

were now resting; the most of them in their lodges or around their cooking fires. We also rested; had even a little sleep. Then, when Sun was low in the west, we sat up and again closely watched the camp and the trail below for the coming of the hunters. Never before had I been so eager for night to come, this night that was to be the end for the killer of my father. I planned just what we should do after killing him: strike across the divide to our camp at Upper Inside Lake. Yes, early in the morning I would be telling my mother, and all the other mourners, that Skull Head was no more!

CHAPTER VII

ESCAPE OF SKULL HEAD

SUN traveled lower and lower in the west; neared his island home. Shadows of night began to darken the valley. We saw the men of the camp go out among their horses, lead in their most valuable ones, and picket them within the circle of the lodges. We saw the women bring buckets of water, and backloads of firewood to their lodges, and then stand with the men, here and there in little groups watching for the return of the hunters. Closely we watched Skull Head. He brought in two horses, picketed them, and then stood before his lodge, motionless, his blanket close-wrapped about him; and we saw that those who passed near him paused not to talk with him. It was as Sahta had said; right there we had proof of it: the man had no friends among the people of his tribe.

We, too, watched for the return of the hunters. They must have gone far down the valley, we thought; perhaps even to Many-Chiefs-Gathered River; and if so, it was possi-

ble that some of our own people had discovered them. It was not far from our camp, down past Lower Inside Lake, to the mouth of Swift-Running Creek; and, as Owl Body now said, our hunters were obliged to go down that way, or out over the ridge to the heads of Little River, in order to strike the large herds of buffalo.[1]

Said Amunis: 'Possibly, the Ku'te-nais went so far out for buffalo that they will not return to-night.'

'If they do not come, so much the better for us: Skull Head will be alone in his lodge,' said I.

'If they do not soon appear, then they never will return: they cannot hunt down there two days without being discovered, and killed by our people,' said Owl Body.

Sun, at last, went on down behind the great Backbone. The red light upon the mountain

[1] From Jealous Women's Lake, where the three were watching the Ku'te-nai camp, it is fifteen miles, in a north of east direction, down Swift-Running Creek, to Many-Chiefs-Gathered River (Saint Mary's River). The camp of the Pi-ku'ni, it should be remembered, was at the foot of Upper Inside Lake, ten miles south of the junction of the river and the Creek. By way of the trail across the ridge — under the end of Flat-Top Mountain — the two camps were therefore only about fifteen miles apart.

across from us began to fade; soon, very soon, we would leave our watching place, go down across the creek, and approach the lodge in which, alone, Skull Head would be sitting before his little fire. And then — ha! I could just see his sudden look of surprise, of fear, when we lifted the entrance curtain and aimed our guns at him. We would shoot, and he would fall over, perhaps right into the fire. And then? Why, I would go right into the lodge, strike his mean body, and so count coup upon him. Yes, I was sure that I could do that, and take his gun, my father's very own gun, and escape pursuit of the few men in the camp. Yes, my friend, such was my thought when, suddenly, the trail under us became alive with returning Ku'te-nai hunters and their women. Riding swiftly; quirting their sweating horses. It was not necessary for Owl Body to say, 'Ha! They found something down at the edge of the plains!' For Amunis and I knew also that our people had discovered them, and were probably close upon their heels. Water flew as they dashed across the creek and on into the camp, shouting to those who came running to meet them.

My friend, you have, perhaps, broken open

an ants' nest and then seen the ants run wildly about in all directions? Well, just like the ants were the people in that camp. They ran hither and thither; women shrieking, children crying, men shouting. Loudest of all, a man — the chief, no doubt — who was riding the circle of the lodges, issuing commands to the fear-crazed ones; striking with his quirt women who were not taking down their lodges, and ordering them to get together quickly their most valued possessions, in readiness to put upon the horses that their men were running in and saddling. Yes, all that we saw, while we watched Skull Head saddle one of the two horses he had previously brought in and then stand beside it, motionless as a tree, a rock, while women and children ran in and out of the lodge which he had occupied. The man of that lodge ran in the extra horses, spoke to him, the while he angrily waved his arms, urging him, no doubt, to help in the preparations for flight. But Skull Head never moved, perhaps made no reply.

'Ha! But he is the proud, the mean one!' said Amunis.

'Not for us, I fear, this night to put an end to him,' I mourned.

To that I got no answer.

'I cannot, cannot let this chance go. I shall make an attempt to kill him!' I went on.

'Yes. A little later: when it becomes dark enough for us to go down without discovery by the men across there,' Owl Body agreed.

That time soon came. We sneaked from ledge to ledge down into the narrow valley and headed toward the ford. Too late! Too late! The Ku'te-nais were already crossing it! We dropped down into the brush as they began passing us; quirting their horses as they went hurrying up the valley, up the trail upon which they had come from their West-Side country. We were close to the trail, not more then twenty steps from it; but already the night was so dark that the passing riders were but dim shapes to us. We could not even distinguish men from women. Three or four of the women were wailing as they rushed past us, and by that we knew for sure that the hunting party had had a fight with some of our people and several of them had been killed. My friend, low was my heart as I knelt there in the brush, for Skull Head was one of those riders hurrying past me, and I could not see him. Always, yes, every time that I got sight

of him, something had happened, as now, to prevent my killing him. Were these occurrences just by chance, or was it that the man had a secret helper who powerfully protected him? Hai! I began to fear that I would never, never be able to make him pay for the killing of my father.

Quickly the long column of the fleeing Ku'-te-nais passed us; the thunder of their horses' hooves upon the hard ground dimmed, died out.

Amunis was first of us to speak: 'Kyi! Again we follow them! Again we have to cross over into their all but meatless, timbered country! Well, let us be going!'

'No, not yet. Our people will soon be here; we will go on with them,' Owl Body replied.

We went out to the trail, sat down, and listened for the coming of our warriors. We wondered how many of them would come. We were eager to learn just what had happened to the Ku'te-nai hunting party, down below. The camp across from us had been so quickly abandoned that the frightened people must have left in it much of value. Amunis was all for crossing over and examining it. Owl Body said that, if we went over, we might not meet

our coming people, surely somewhere on the trail below, and, anyhow, it was too dark for proper search of the camp. Then, while they argued about it, over across from us — a horse nickered, and another and another nickered in answer: the Ku'te-nais had left in such haste that they had not rounded up all of their horses that were grazing out beyond their camp.

Said Amunis: 'We have to ride in order to go on with our people when they come, so I am going across and take those animals.'

'When our people arrive, we can ride double with some of them,' said I.

'Yes, but no one, in pursuit of the enemy wants added weight upon his horse.'

'True. Go over, you two. I will remain here, and if our fighters arrive while you are gone, I will try to hold them until you return. Now, hurry!'

We ran to the edge of the ford, took off our leggins and moccasins, and crossed, and went on up into the camp. The poles of every lodge remained just as they had been put up. Unlike the tribes of our plains, the West-Side tribes could not keep a set of lodge-poles: their horses could not draw them along the winding and

difficult trails of their mountain and heavy-forest country; they were obliged to cut fresh poles for every encampment that they made. But the people of this camp had abandoned it so hurriedly, were so terribly frightened, that several of the families had left their lodges intact, lodgeskins and all, with not even the pegs withdrawn. We came to one of these, and entered it; we groped around for wood, put it upon the coals in the fireplace, and soon had light. We found, as we expected, several rawhide ropes near the doorway, and another one, strung above the fire, upon which meat was drying — our buffalo meat. There were other things in the lodge: seven well-filled, grass-woven sacks; a parfleche; a small roll of beaver and other furs. We could not carry them nor take time to examine them. We took the three ropes and hurried up onto the partly timbered ridge above the camp, passing as we did so three more lodges complete. We stopped, listened, but could hear no horses moving about, could hear none grazing. Amunis imitated the nicker of a horse, and at once we heard an answering nicker, farther up the slope. We went on, slowly, easily. Soon we heard the nipping and chewing of grass by

more than one animal. We went on again, and soon dimly saw one of the feeders, though we were close to it. Very gentle the horse proved to be; he did not move off as we advanced. Amunis roped him, and got upon his back. We could hear other horses grazing a little farther up. I got above them — four they were — and drove them; they willingly followed Amunis on his horse. We went down through the camp to the ford, and there, as the horses drank, I caught and mounted one of them, and we then soon joined Owl Body, where he watched the trail. He was pleased with our success, and himself roped one of the horses. We then sat down beside the trail, ready, eager for the coming of our people. We told Owl Body of all that we had seen in the abandoned camp: of the meat and things in the lodge that we had entered; the buffalo hides pegged upon the ground between the lodges. Said he: 'Those grass-woven sacks that you saw surely contain dried camas roots; and now that we have horses, we can soon take them. Go after them, you two, and quickly bring them; yes, and some of that dry meat, too.'

We mounted our Ku'te-nai horses and re-

turned to the lodge. The fire that we had built in it was still burning. Sure enough, the grass-woven sacks were filled with dried camas roots. We emptied out one of them, and stuffed it with dried meat. I then seized the roll of furs, Amunis took up the two sacks of camas and meat, and we hurried back to Owl Body. The camas roots were freshly roasted; soft, sticky, very sweet. We ate many of them.

'Good food; very, very good food,' said Amunis, when we had finished eating. 'Camas grows plentifully upon our side of the mountains, so why is it that our women do not gather and roast plenty of the roots for our winter use?'

'Ha! That is hard work. Never, never will our women do it so long as we keep them plentifully supplied with real food!'[1] Owl Body replied.

[1] Ni-ta'pi wak'sin, real, or actual food, was buffalo meat, the staff of life of the Blackfeet as well as the other tribes of the plains. Owl Body's remark about the Blackfeet women was not fair; they were hard, and willing workers; they gathered and dried large quantities of berries for winter use. They made pemmican; tanned many buffalo robes, buffalo leather for lodgeskins, buckskins for wearing apparel; and kept their fine lodges well furnished. Even if they had known how to roast camas — a difficult process, peculiar to the West-of-the-Rockies tribes — they had not the time to devote to it.

Escape of Skull Head

We had rested so well during the day that we were not sleepy. We watched the Seven Persons in the northern sky, as they marked the passing of the night, and anxiously we listened for the coming of our warriors. Again and again we said to one another that it was not possible they were not coming. Surely, the Ku'te-nai hunters had met and fought some of our people, down below, and knew that they would be pursued by the whole force of our tribe, else why had they come hurrying back without so much as a single buffalo hide and load of meat, and then the whole camp of them fled on, leaving, in their haste, some of their horses, even lodges, food, and valuable furs? Up the valley and down it, and upon the near slopes of the mountains, wolves howled, coyotes yelped, foxes hoarsely gave their snuffling barks, owls hooted. A bear, passing so near that we got the strong odor of him, frightened our horses, and we had much trouble in quieting them.

The Seven Persons marked the middle of the night when, at last, we heard the thudding of heavy feet upon the trail below. We sprang up, tossed the food sacks and bundle of furs out into the brush, and got hold of our horses.

On and on came the riders, and, when their leader was close to us, Owl Body cried: 'Pi-ku'ni! At last you are here!'

'Ha! And who are you? You are Owl Body?' the leader asked.

Well we knew that voice: he was not our war chief, Little Dog; he was Running Fisher, of my own clan, the Small Robes, and a good warrior.

'Yes! And here with me are Bear Child and Amunis,' Owl Body replied.

At that, with exclamations of surprise, the party came crowding up around us, eagerly asking what news we had for them. Running Fisher ordered them to be still; to let him and us do the talking. So was it that we first gave our news of the enemy, of their sudden flight from this place, Skull Head one of them. Running Fisher then said that a few of our men, out after buffalo, had discovered the Ku'te-nai hunting party below the Inside Lakes, killed four of them, and then had hurried home to call out all of our fighting men; but not many were there, for Little Dog, with many members of the All Friends Bands, had gone in quest of a white buffalo that had been seen well down on the plain between Little River

and Cutbank River. So he — Running Fisher — had come on with all who could be spared from camp, only seventy-three men.

'Ha! Only seventy-three — with us, seventy-six. We are not many to pursue these Ku'te-nais, their fighters more than a hundred men,' said Owl Body.

'Yet must we do so, do our best to kill that Skull Head; make them pay for crossing over into our buffalo country,' Running Fisher replied, and to that all there shouted their agreement.

As we began falling into line upon the trail, I asked Running Fisher about my mother. She was well, he said, and was constantly praying for me; that I might safely return to her and with the scalp of Skull Head. Also, he told us that the raid Little Dog had led against the Liars, in our Sweetgrass Hills country, had not been successful. Upon arriving there, it had been found that the Liars had fled northward, all of five days before; and with that much start, it had been thought impossible to overtake them before they could regain their muskeg country, and the great body of their kind remaining there.

We pushed on. Up and up the trail down

which Owl Body, Amunis, and I had followed the Ku'te-nais. The night was so dark, the trail so winding, and in places so steep that we could not make our horses go faster than a jogging trot. We knew of old the ways of the Ku'te-nai and other West-Side tribes when, fearing pursuit by us, they fled back into their poor country. So was it that when day came, and we were still quite a little way below the summit of the Backbone, we proceeded more slowly, frequently pausing to look for any signs that might betray the enemy, lying in wait in some favorable place to entrap us. But look as we would, we could see nothing to arouse suspicion of their presence. We went on and on up the rocky trail; into the gap in the Backbone through which it ran, and began the descent of the West-Side slope, and still no least sign of the enemy. Then, suddenly, one of the men in the rear of our line shouted to us to halt: 'Up there on that cliff ahead of us! Look closely at it,' he said. 'I am sure that I saw there the head of a man as he looked down at us and then drew back.'

Look as we would, we could see only the bare edge of the cliff. The trail ran close under it, along a steep slope of fine rocks, running

down to the edge of another cliff. Back the way we had come there was no place where we could climb in order to see the top of the cliff; and, because of the sharp bend of it, we could not see the far end of its high wall; it might be that, somewhere there, ascent of it was possible.

Said Running Fisher, after a time: 'Before going on, we must learn if the enemy really are up on the cliff.'

At that, a number of men spoke up, offering to go on and try to find a place from which they could see the top of it. But at that, the man who had halted us, a young man of our Fat Roasters Clan, named Three Feathers, shouted that that must be his privilege; that he alone had the right to do this scouting for us; and Running Fisher replied that he should have his way about it. So Three Feathers got down off his horse, ran past the line of us, and then more slowly went on along the trail, we all closely watching him. As he neared the sharp bend of the cliff and the trail, he moved on still more slowly, a step at a time, gun held in readiness for quick use. At last he arrived at the bend, began leaning out, peering around it. Suddenly raised the gun and fired, and at

the same time we heard a number of shots by enemies that the bend hid from us. We saw Three Feathers whirl around, nearly fall, then start limping toward us. And at that, many of the Ku'te-nais, all of forty or fifty, appeared upon the edge of the cliff, some of them showering rocks down upon Three Feathers, others shooting at us with their guns and bows.

We heard Three Feathers shout to us: 'You cannot go on! They have built a high rock barricade across the trail. There are many behind it!' And then, from above, a big rock came down upon his shoulder; he fell, rolled down the steep and narrow slope, and off the straight drop of the great cliff at its lower edge. So went to the Sandhills [1] the shadow of Three Feathers, that good and brave young man.

Glad and loud were the shouts of the Ku'te-nais at the passing of Three Feathers. We were returning their fire, but they had great advantage of us. Up on that high cliff, they

[1] Spat'si-ko — Sandhills. A dreary waste of sand dunes near the Canadian line, northeast of Fort Benton, Montana, the abode of the Blackfeet dead. Their shadows — souls — there live in shadow lodges; hunt and kill shadow buffalo; cook shadow meat upon shadow fires; fires that give out light, but no heat: a dreary mockery of their life in the flesh, by no means the 'happy hunting ground,' as pictured by various white recorders of Indian beliefs.

SO WENT TO THE SANDHILLS THE SHADOW OF THREE FEATHERS

exposed only their heads and shoulders to our aims, and kept dodging back wholly out of sight. We could go forward only in single file upon the narrow and dangerous trail; and around the bend, as Three Feathers had warned us, the trail was walled across and defended by others of the enemy. Should we attempt to go on and fight them, we should be showered with rocks by those above. One after another, two of our number were killed, Yellow Kidney and Weasel Eyes, and Amunis got an arrow in his arm. Several of our horses were killed. And at that, Running Fisher shouted to us: 'It is useless to try to go on! Turn back! Turn back.' He was right. Had we been ten hundred instead of the few that we were, we could not have forced the trap that the Ku'te-nais had set for us at that place of narrow trail under one cliff and almost at the edge of another one below. As it was, we had great difficulty in turning our horses about, so steep and yielding was the slide-rock slope upon which we were halted. And just as we were started the other way, an enemy bullet struck me, and broke the top of my right shoulder. The pain of it was terrible; it burned like fire. I felt faint, and nearly tumbled from my horse.

As we went hurrying back up the trail, the shouts of the enemy upon the cliff came but dimly to my ears.

We did not stop until we were well down upon our slope of the great Backbone. The bodies of Yellow Kidney and Weasel Eyes had been brought along, and were buried well off the trail, the while the wounded were cared for, Running Fisher himself bandaging my torn and broken shoulder. He was, as were we all, very sad over our loss of three good friends. Again and again he said to us: 'It is my fault that they are gone. I should have known better than attempt to follow closely to attack West-Siders in this country of high cliffs and narrow trails. We should have waited for some nights; given them time to settle in one of their far-down, timbered valleys, and then crossed, on foot, not with horses, to make a night attack upon their camp.'

'Yes,' some one at last replied. 'That we will do, later on. But now, what?'

'Homeward with our wounded. Later on, a raid upon this tribe of the West-Siders, by way of Cutbank River Trail across,' Running Fisher replied.

We went on. Down past Jealous Women's

Lake and between Fighting Bears Lakes, across Swift-Running Creek; then up the timbered ridge, past the north cliff of Flat-Top Mountain, and thence down to our camp at the foot of Upper Inside Lake. Night had long since come when we arrived there, but the lodges of the great circle were still glowing, our people still sitting around their little fires. They heard the tramp of our horses, and came rushing out to greet us, eagerly asking what news we had for them. That Skull Head — had we seen him, killed him? a hundred voices asked.

Crying, laughing, giving praise to Sun for answering her prayers for my safe return to her, my mother eased me down from my horse, supported me to my couch in our big and comfortable lodge; and while she bathed and greased and rebandaged my wound, and then set before me good food, I told her all that I had seen and done during my quest of Skull Head. Our relatives and some friends had come in, and sat silently, solemnly listening; and here and there in the camp, hurting our ears, saddening our hearts, we heard the wailings of newly made widows and their children. Said my mother, when I ended my tale: 'Oh, this constant war between us and the Ku'te-

nais! But for that, my man would still be alive, right here with us, this night. Oh, what suffering it brings upon us women and our children! I cannot bear it! Though none will help me, though I go alone across this great Backbone, I shall try to make lasting peace between the Ku'te-nai tribes and the three tribes of us.'

'Woman! So long as Skull Head lives, there can be no peace between us and those West-Siders!' one of our visitors exclaimed.

'As soon as my torn shoulder heals, I go again in quest of Skull Head!' said I.

My mother looked at me, oh, so sadly, bowed her head, and said no more.

CHAPTER VIII

SKULL HEAD AGAIN APPEARS

SEE now, my friend, what my possession of my father's far-seeing instrument brought to pass. My torn and broken shoulder confined me to camp. Little Dog and his large following of our hunters continued their search for the white buffalo cow that had been seen on a fork of Little River, and I was grieved that I could not be with them. Also, there was talk of forming a large war-party to go on a raid against the Ku'te-nais, and I feared that my shoulder would not heal in time for me to join it. White Wolf and his little tribe of Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki, whom Amunis and I had met on Fought-the-Ku'te-nais River, were encamped quite near us, and Amunis and I frequently visited them. With one, Cut Hand, a man of maybe forty winters, who spoke our language well, we became very friendly. He told us stories so funny that for the time he made us forget our painful wounds. He came to visit me, one morning, and noticed the far-seeing instrument, suspended above my couch.

'Ha! Let me look through it, at the near mountains,' he said. 'I am tired of buffalo meat. I want some fat bighorn meat for a change. If I can see any of the animals, I will try to kill one of them.'

We went outside, sat down, and he adjusted the instrument, looked carefully at Top-is-Flat Mountain, and the rocky slopes under its high cliffs. After a long time, he said that he could see none of the animals there, and turned the instrument upon Stone Head Mountain.[1]

'Ha! I see three bighorns!' he soon exclaimed. 'Three very large males at the right end of the mountain; on the steep slide-rock just below the cliff. Take you a look at them.'

He handed me the instrument. I got behind him, and with my left hand rested it upon his shoulder, and soon found the animals. As I watched, one of them pawed a resting-place in the small rocks of the slope and lay down in it. Then Cut Hand again took the instrument, but soon gave it back to me. 'All three are now lying down,' he said. 'They will remain

[1] On the map, Eagle Shot Mountain. For the Blackfeet and the Ku'te-nai names for this mountain, and all other topographical features of Glacier National Park, and tribal legends pertaining to them, see *Signposts of Adventure*. (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.)

there all day. I am going after them. They are now very fat, the old males. If I make a killing, you shall have some of the meat.'

I put away the instrument, accompanied him to his camp, and he sent his son for his horses. When they were brought in, he told the boy and his mother to accompany him on the hunt. I watched them saddle up, mount, and ford the river, and then I went home.

Amunis came to visit with me, and when I told him that Cut Hand and his family had gone up onto Stone Head Mountain, after three bighorns that we had seen there, he said that it would be worth while to see our friend approach the animals. We got my mother to adjust the instrument, build a little pile of wood upon which we cripples could rest it, and then by turns kept the instrument upon the three animals, and upon the little open parks of the mountain slope, where we might get sight of the ascending hunter.

Sun traveled up and up through the blue, and was straight above us, when, at last, Amunis, who then had the instrument, cried out to me that he had discovered Cut Hand and his two followers: they had just entered the upper one of the parks, the one that was

separated by a belt of heavy timber from the slide-rock slope upon which the bighorns were lying. And then a little later: 'They have just gone up into the timber. From its upper edge, Cut Hand can easily shoot one of the animals. I will now watch them.'

Came to us, presently, from that far-up mountain-side, the faint boom of a gun, and then Amunis said to me: 'Ha! The three bighorns have got up from their beds . . . are walking off toward the other end of the mountain . . . they have stopped and are looking back . . . now they are again moving on . . . not much frightened. Why, Cut Hand did not shoot at them; he must have shot at an elk or a deer in the timber.'

'Strange that he would do that when he so much wanted bighorn meat,' I remarked.

'Ha! One of the three is in the upper park, riding swiftly down it. A small rider; the boy, I think. There! He has gone into the timber below the park.'

'Perhaps his father is in trouble up there. Maybe he is injured; by a real-bear, or something of that kind,' I said.

Amunis turned the far-seeing instrument upon the lower one of the little parks, and a

little later said that the rider was going swiftly down it. I proposed that we go down to the other camp, to be there when the rider should arrive, and so learn at once the reason for his hurried return. My mother, who had been listening to our talk, was also eager to go. She put away the instrument and caught up with us.

We found White Wolf, the chief of the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki, at home, and, when we told him what we had seen, he was of our mind, that Cut Hand was in trouble on the mountain. He shouted out the news that we had brought and ordered his men to run in their horses and saddle them. Not many men were there at the time, the greater number of them having gone with our hunters in quest of the white buffalo.

The camp of the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki was at the edge of the river, about midway between the foot of Upper Inside Lake and the mouth of Divide Creek. We all gathered at the ford and anxiously awaited the coming of the rider. He presently burst from the quaking-aspen thicket across, his horse white-flecked with foamy sweat. The water showered up and fell like rain as he crossed the ford. He dropped

from his horse and stood before the chief, his eyes big like those of an owl, his body quivering as though he were freezing. With shaking hand he pointed to the mountain and, pantingly, jerkily, said to him, as we afterward learned: 'We entered that highest growth of timber, the one at this end of the mountain. I had stopped to eat some berries, and was well behind my father and mother. As they got down off their horses — my father was to go on ahead to shoot the bighorns — I heard a gunshot, and saw my father fall, and heard my mother scream. Then a man came running and seized my mother; as she fought him, I saw his face. He was that horrible-face Ku'te-nai, Cut Nose. Then he saw me, let go of my mother, and started toward me, drawing bow and arrows from the case at his side. My mother came running, too, shouting to me to hurry home; that I must live. As I went, I looked back: the last I saw of my mother, she was again struggling with that Cut Nose.'

At that, the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki made terrible outcries of surprise and anger, and all that the chief said to us then was that the Ku'te-nai we called Skull Head had killed the boy's father and seized his mother. He couldn't under-

stand the object of it, for Skull Head had always been upon friendly terms with him and his people.

'But you yourself told me, when we visited you in your camp on Fought-the-Ku'te-nais River, that Skull Head's personality had become just like that of a real-bear. Well, real-bears have no friends; they even hate one another,' I replied.

'True! True! And now — oh, that more of my men were here! We are so few to make a surround up there, and find that killer, that woman seizer.'

'Ride up to our camp for help! Hurry!' Amunis told him, and he quickly mounted, and, after a few words to his men, was gone.

The frightened, fatherless, and motherless boy was crying pitifully. Women tried to comfort him. Amunis and I talked with one of the men, one who spoke our language, and we pointed to the place where the three bighorns had been lying. We explained that Skull Head had made his attack in the timber, just below it. The man told the others there all that he learned from us. They stared up at the mountain; occasionally in low voices they spoke to one another.

White Wolf came back, presently, with all the able men of our camp who had not gone hunting that day, fifty and more of them. The Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki men were only eighteen in number. One of our men asked us for directions, and Amunis and I again explained all that we had seen with my far-seeing instrument. The crying boy was asked if he would lead the men to the place where his father had been killed. He nodded his head, and got upon his horse. We watched the party ford the river, and then went our homeward way, my mother very sad of face and silent, Amunis and I terribly low of heart because our wounds prevented our joining in the search for Skull Head, again so near. All this freshened my mother's grief. When we arrived at our lodge, she went on up the shore of the lake, and there for a long time mourned for my father, calling his name over and over.

Again Amunis and I got out my far-seeing instrument and had a woman properly adjust it. With it we followed the course of the searching party up the mountain. We saw them enter the upper growth of timber, and, after a time, return to the uppermost park, there leave their horses in charge of three of their

number, and go back up into the timber, there, doubtless, to scatter out in quest of the killer. We wondered if Skull Head had killed Cut Hand's woman. We said to one another, and to a little crowd of women and old men who had gathered around us, that Skull Head would prove too cunning for the searchers; that they would not find him. Whereupon old Red Bird's Tail, owner of the Worm medicine pipe, called a meeting in his lodge, to pray Sun to aid the searching party, to give Skull Head's body into their hands.

The day wore on. As it neared its end, our multitude of hunters of the white buffalo returned, having seen nothing of the animal. So important was the quest of it, so much was its hide wanted for sacrifice to Sun, at the now near approach of the time of building his great lodge, that Big Lake himself had taken the lead in the many days' hunt for the sacred one. Upon entering camp and learning of this new trouble, he came, with Little Dog and others, straight on to Amunis and me, and questioned us as he took up the far-seeing instrument and leveled it on Stone Head Mountain. Of the party up there, none were to be seen except the three herding the horses in the upper park.

Big Lake consulted Little Dog and the chiefs of our different clans, and all declared that they and their men were so tired, so worn by their long quest of the white one, that they could go no farther that day. They went to their lodges. Amunis and I continued our watch until it was too dark to see the mountain-side. My mother then called us in to eat the evening meal that she had carefully prepared, as she said, for two brave boys who deserved good food.

A little later, we two and Owl Body were summoned to a gathering of chiefs in Big Lake's lodge, to tell them of our experiences on the other side of the Backbone. We had barely finished when our men returned from their hunt for Skull Head on the mountain across. With the few Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki who accompanied them, they had gone directly to the body of Cut Hand, and found beside it another one of Skull Head's bear-fur-tufted coup-sticks; and near by, grazing about in the timber, the two horses that Cut Hand and his woman had ridden. Of the woman there was no sign; nor of Skull Head. Whatever way he had gone, forcing the woman to accompany him, they had left no trail. The party had

scattered out, and searched the whole slope of the mountain up to the foot of its high cliffs: it was as though Skull Head had grown wings and flown away with the woman. Of course, that was impossible, but, anyhow, the man was as cunning as he was mean; it was useless to make further search for him. Big Lake and his council were also of that opinion. They believed that Skull Head would take the woman over the Backbone to the camp of his tribe, and would not soon again appear upon our side; but, to take no chances of that, Little Dog named several members of the All Friends Society to night-watch our camp. The night passed quietly enough.

On the following morning, there came to my mother and me an old Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki woman, leading Cut Hand's poor little tear-faced, sorrowing son.

'Greeting. What can we do for you?' my mother said to her.

Pointing a shaking finger to me, the old woman angrily said: 'I came to see you, Bear Child, to tell you that you must pay this boy for the wrong that you have done him.'

'You must be crazy! I have never harmed the boy,' I answered.

'Ha! But you have! You gave Cut Hand to look through your far-seeing instrument and find those bighorns, up on the mountain. But for that, he would never have gone up there, and would be right with us now; his woman, too. Yes, it is your fault that this poor little one is without father, without mother. Nor has he relatives. So is it that you must pay him, that he may pay others to care for him — me, perhaps.'

'You Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki are a queer people; very different from us,' I told her. 'We raise our fatherless and motherless ones, gladly, without thought of pay. Nor am I to blame for the boy's terrible loss: Cut Hand asked me to let him look through my far-seeing instrument; to try to find some bighorns, as he was hungry for bighorn meat. Could I refuse him use of the instrument? No!'

As I spoke, my mother held out her arms to the boy. He ran to her, and she held him close. He put his little arms about her neck and cried. Said she to the old woman: 'He is my son now, my second son. I shall carefully raise him.'

'No! No! You shall not have him!' the old woman shouted, and started to seize the boy. He shrank from her, and held more closely to

my mother. I held the old woman off from them, and ordered her to go home. She turned about and ran, shouting that she would soon return, and not alone.

Presently, White Wolf and his women, and several others of the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki came to us from the lower camp. He smiled when he saw the boy in my mother's arms, and shortly questioned him. He then said to my mother: 'Is it true, that which our old woman told us? Do you really want this boy for your very own?'

'Yes! That Skull Head made me a widow, the boy an orphan, so is it that we are very close to one another. Yes, I want him! I shall be good to him; do give him to me.'

'My women and I intended to raise the boy, but he says that he would like to live with you. So be it, he is yours. I know that you will be good to him. And there are the horses of his parents, their lodge and other things ——'

'I want only the boy: horses, all other things, I have in plenty for him,' my mother interrupted.

White Wolf's women then talked with my mother about the boy, saying, among other things, that he was of good heart, a brave

little one, and never quarreling with the other children of their camp.

So was it, my friend, that, because of my far-seeing instrument, the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki lost two of their number and I obtained an almost-brother. From the day that Cut Hand's son became one of us, I loved him; more and more as time went on, as did my mother. In clothing him, caring for him, teaching him our language, she found happiness; and being so occupied, she had less time to sit alone and lonely, grieving over the passing of my father.

The time for us to build Sun's lodge was now very near. Big Lake, Little Dog, and our other chiefs of clans, counseling together, decided that one last attempt should be made to find and kill the white buffalo, so that its hide could be sacrificed to Sun during the ceremony. Lo, even as they were planning the hunt, Feathered Lance, looking for a horse that had strayed from his band, came upon the cow, and killed her. He gave the carcass to Sun, and came singing into camp with the hide. Never had I seen our people so excited as then; we all ran to gather around the killer and view the white-furred hide, and when he told that he had discovered the cow leading a little herd of

cows and calves straight toward our camp, our Sun priests declared that sure proof of the Above One's love for us. He had directed the steps of the cow straight to our camp, that we might sacrifice to him that which he valued above all things, a well-tanned, white buffalo robe. As you know, my friend, Scar Face, who, in the long ago, visited Sun in his lodge on an island of the Everywhere-Water in the West, reported that all the couches in the lodge were of that kind of robes. So now Feathered Lance's women tanned this robe as quickly as was possible, and when it was finished, the four days' ceremony of Sun's lodge was carried out in all its sacred details.[1]

On the first day of the ceremony, I entered the great lodge, and a Sun priest handed me a morsel of one of the hundred buffalo tongues that the sacred women builders of the lodge had dried. I ate a part of it as I prayed, and buried the remainder there in the ground, my offering to Earth Mother. Surely you must know what I prayed for besides long and full

[1] The Blackfeet tribes' name for their great annual religious ceremony is O-kan' — His Vision. The early fur-traders named it the medicine lodge. For detailed description of the ceremony, see *Sun Woman* by J. W. Schultz. (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.)

life for us all? Well, I asked Sun to give me his powerful help in that which I most earnestly wanted to do: to kill Skull Head, the killer of my father. And there I gave the Above One a beautiful otter skin, a Sun priest attaching it to the center post of the lodge, where were all the other offerings of our people, greatest of them all, the white buffalo robe.

And then, on the last day of the O-kan′, came my turn to count my coups. Kind friends took the parts of my enemies, and, crippled though I was, I did quite well in enacting the way in which I had fought and killed. And when I finished each coup, the drums of our All Friends Society were beaten, and the people shouted again and again my name in praise. Glad! Glad then was my heart! And oh, how eager for my wound soon to heal, that I might go again in quest of Skull Head!

Two days after the end of the O-kan′, our chiefs again held a council in regard to Skull Head, and again Sahta spoke against a large party going in quest of him. The surer way was for a small party to go over across, locate the camp in which was living the one with the horrible face, and then lie in wait for him

upon the trails running out from it. There followed much argument about it, several of the chiefs urging that the whole force of our warriors should go over and completely wipe out the Ku'te-nai camp. Sahta replied that it could not be done: in that West-Side country of heavy timber and thick underbrush, many of the tribe would escape, and Skull Head, cunning as a real-bear, would without doubt be one of them. Also, the survivors would call out the South Ku'te-nai tribe, the Kal'i-spels, River People, and Blue Paint People, and the result would be that more than half of our women would become widows. Well, the result of the council was that Owl Body and Running Fisher were named to lead a party of ten in quest of Skull Head, and they at once selected the men they wanted. They named old Lame Bull, powerful Sun priest that he was, to give them a sacred sweat and pray for them during their absence. As Sahta advised, they decided to cross the Backbone through a break in it at the head of Red Eagle Creek. Other than he, no one in the three tribes of us had ever followed that trail-across, a trail not traversable by horses, owing to a number of straight drops on the west side, too

high for them to jump. I carefully listened to the directions he gave them for making this crossing: From our camp at the foot of Upper Inside Lake, they were to go to Red Eagle Lake;[1] up its right shore; up Red Eagle Creek to a great slope of ice; along its left side into the gap in the Backbone; down the west side along a stream that the Ku'te-nais called Wolf Finger Creek, where, at its junction with the middle fork of Liar River, they would strike Running Eagle's Trail to Sacred Dancing Lake. Somewhere thereabouts, he believed, they would find the North Ku'te-nai camp.

Our little war-party left that very evening. Daily thereafter, near set of Sun, Lame Bull mounted his red-painted horse and made the round of our camp circle, shaking his red-painted sacred rattle and shouting, over and over, the name of each member of the party, thus reminding us that we must not neglect to pray for the success and safe return of the absent ones.

[1] Government Rangers have made this Red Eagle Pass Trail one of the best trails in Glacier Park. Every summer, numbers of tourists traverse it, afoot and on horseback. Four varieties of trout are plentiful in Red Eagle Lake and in Nyack Creek (Wolf Finger Creek), on the west slope of the range.

Skull Head Again Appears

As was usual in every summer, following the O-kan′ ceremonies, many parties of our warriors now set out to raid the camps of our various enemies, the Crows, the Assiniboines, the Sioux, and other still more distant tribes. The Sak-sis′ O-ki-tu′ki broke camp, and went north to trap beaver along the foot of the mountains. Days and days went by, long days to Amunis and me, confined to camp and idleness by our wounds. My mother had Lame Bull give my little, almost-brother, a worthwhile name: Apauk (White Flint Knife). She made good clothing and beautiful moccasins for him. One of my friends gave him a little bow and some arrows. Amunis and I taught him our language, which he learned rapidly. Every evening, I added a stick to the little pile of those by which I kept count of the days since Running Fisher's and Owl Body's war-party had gone. Daily, we talked about them, and wondered where they were; whether they had discovered the camp in which Skull Head was living, and were watching the trails, to put an end to his mean life. When they had been gone fifteen nights, we began to look for their return to us. The twentieth night of their absence passed, and we became uneasy

about them. By that time the wound in Amunis's arm was healed, and he was doing some hunting and trapping; and my shoulder bone was so nearly well that I could move my arm. The thirtieth night for that West-Side war-party passed, and the whole camp of us were more than worrying about them. We all — except their women, who would not give up hope — believed that they never would return; that by some mistake on their part they had been discovered by the Ku'te-nais and had all of them been killed. By that time my shoulder bone was completely healed. I had even twice been out after meat and had made good killings of buffalo. So it was that, one evening, I told my mother that, with Amunis, I was again going in quest of Skull Head. She cried, and begged me to remain with her. I told her that, if I did not go, if I did not do all that was possible to kill the killer of my father, I should hate myself so long as I lived.

At last, after much argument, she gave in. 'Like your father, you will have your way; nothing that I can say will stop you,' she said. 'To-morrow, get some Sun priest, other than unlucky Lame Bull, to pray for you. You yourself make a good sacrifice to Sun. I, mean-

time, will prepare the pouch of food and the extra moccasins that you will need for the rocky trail that you must follow. Oh, why must men be ever fighting! O Sun! Let there again be peace between us and the Ku'te-nai tribes, once our good friends.'

Kyi! On the following morning, Amunis and I got Painted Rock, owner of the otter medicine pipe, to pray for us in the sweat lodge that my mother and some of her friends put up for us, and we each gave Sun a fine beaver skin; we went to a near tree, and, with earnest prayers, tied the skins to one of its branches. At midday, we were called to a feast in Big Lake's lodge, and he and Little Dog and other chiefs gave us much advice, wishing us success in our undertaking. A little later, we took up our food-pouches, our weapons, and other necessities, and again set out for the West-Side country.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE KAL'I-SPEL CAMP

WE had gone but a little way from camp, in fact, were still in sight of it, when we heard shouting of our names: Sahta, hurrying to overtake us. 'I was intending to speak with you, before you left, but was delayed in rounding up my horses; they were scattered. I thought that some of them had been stolen during the night.

'Well, you go again, my young ones, in quest of Skull Head: dangerous undertaking. I hate the man, and am as eager for his death as you are. Would that I could join you in your quest of him; but that I cannot do, half-Kal'i-spel that I am, and friendly with the Ku'te-nai, and all other West-Side tribes. Hear me, my young ones! Be cautious, ever cautious! Over in that West-Side country, travel only at night, and remember that those West-Side hunters are ever abroad, sneaking quietly about in the forest upon the trails of elk and deer.'

Turning then to me, that good man went on:

'You, Bear Child! Son of Slender Woman, son of my cousin, best of all the women that I know. For her sake, take you no unnecessary risks. For her sake, do you wear this that I made according to a long-ago vision that I had, that has been my savior in many a dangerous place, in many a battle with the enemy.' And so saying, he took off his necklace and fastened it around my neck. It was made up of seven buffalo stones, a large one in the center, three smaller ones on each side of it. Seven, mind you, the number of that group of sacred stars, the Seven Persons. Equally sacred, of course, equally powerful for good for the wearer, were the buffalo stones.[1] I was so

[1] Buffalo stones are joints of a fossilized sea-plant, and have much the shape of a buffalo. The most likely place to find them is in the shales of the Upper Missouri bad-lands; they are by no means common there. The Blackfeet tribes legend is that, in the long ago, the buffalo herds suddenly disappeared, and the people became desperately hungry, were near starving to death, when, one evening, a young woman, going to the river for water, heard strange singing. The singer proved to be a buffalo stone. It spoke to her, saying: 'Take me up, carry me to your lodge; learn my song, you and your family, and you shall eat.' The woman did as she was told. The people learned the song, and sang it over and over, far into the night. Lo, when they arose, the next morning, there were the buffalo again; near and far and in every direction the plain was black with herds of them. So was it learned that this peculiar stone was very sacred; a powerful helper in time of need.

surprised, so overcome by the gift, that I could only falter, 'You are very generous.'

Sun was near setting that evening when Amunis and I arrived at Red Eagle Lake, and stopped for the night. I had never been there before. I thought it was the most beautiful lake that I had ever seen, because of the great cliff of Red Eagle Mountain rising high above its upper, west side, and the heavy forest on the other side, sloping up to the bare and rocky heights of Ku'te-nai Mountain, upon which is a salt lick much frequented by bighorns and white heads (goats), deer and elk. Many a one of them have I killed there.

There was no wind. All over the lake were trout splashing the water, some of them of great size. Some beavers and two otters were swimming about. At the head of the lake, three moose appeared, and straight across from us, a small band of deer came out to drink. At our backs, not far up on the steep mountain-side, were some female bighorns and their young, and above them were a scattered band of big white heads. We enjoyed watching the animals; there were so many kinds of them; more and more of them appearing along the shores as night came on. Our hunters had

not been up there. In those days of plenty of buffalo, we had no need to hunt the timber and the mountain animals, except when our women wanted some of their hides with which to make leather for clothing. But we were not so pleased when a real-bear appeared upon the shore, a little way below us. Very large he was, his body fully as heavy as that of a cow buffalo.

Amunis signed to me: 'What shall we do?'

'Go up onto the mountain,' I replied. The sticky-mouth [1] was drinking; he started to swim about. We sneaked back through the willows and little pines to the foot of the mountain, only a few steps, went up it a short climb, and out onto a ledge of rock. By that time it was quite dark. We made ourselves as comfortable as possible, and slept.

We awoke with the first light of the new day. I asked Amunis if he had had a vision of any kind? None. Neither had I. We remained upon the ledge until Sun appeared. Peaceful, beautiful was the lake and its valley. Plenty of deer and elk were in sight. We went down

[1] Pahk'si kwoyi (sticky-mouth) is the sacred name for the bear, but only Sun priests and Sun women — women who have been builders of the medicine lodges — are permitted to use that name when speaking of the animal. Its common name is kai'yo.

to the lake, bathed in it, ate a very little of our dried food, and followed a heavy game trail up the shore, up the ever-narrowing, heavily timbered valley beyond the lake. This was the trail that Running Fisher and Owl Body and their men had followed, but, look as we would, we could see no least sign of their passing. We could not believe that they were still alive. Somewhere over on the West-Side, they had met their end. But in what way? Had Skull Head himself had a part in it? Well we knew the danger that would beset us, once we descended the other slope of the Backbone. We determined to be more than ever cautious down there.

Having passed a falls of the creek, we came to its forks, and, as Sahta had advised, we went on up the right-hand one. After a long climb, we arrived at the great ice slope that he had described.[1] A band of white heads were crossing it. All the morning we had seen white heads and bighorns along the high slopes of the valley. As we were passing this big ice, a lone male bighorn offered a chance for good food that I could not let go, so I shot him, and we took some of his very fat meat.

[1] Red Eagle Glacier.

In the Kal-i-spel Camp

Having passed the big ice, we entered the gap in the Backbone, through which the trail ran, and, beginning the descent of the West-Side slope, we soon came to the breaks in the trail which prevented the West-Side hunters from traversing it with horses. That they could not do so was the reason for the great plenty of game animals that we had seen in our Red Eagle Creek valley and its rocky slopes. Hampered as we were with our food-pouches, weapons, and the fresh meat that we carried, we found it not easy to descend the little cliffs. We were now following down Wolf Finger Creek. Its valley was so narrow and winding that at no time could we see any great distance down it. The trail gave no evidence that men had ever used it, and only here and there were the imprints of a few deer. Yes, we were again in an all but meatless country. Coming to a stand of a few dead little birch trees, we built a fire with several of them, broiled all of our bighorn meat, ate small portions of it, and resumed our journey. But soon we stopped at one side of the trail and slept until night came, when we again went on, Night-Light, then shining all during the night, making it easy for us to see our way. So was it

that, when the new day came, we had arrived at the Middle Fork of Liar River (Flathead River) and our own Running Eagle's Trail going down beside it. There were fresh horse tracks in it, tracks of about twenty-five or thirty horses, going up the trail, going swiftly up it. The riders, then, had not been a party of hunters from one of the West-Side tribes. No! They were a war-party from our own plains country; perhaps even Running Fisher and Owl Body and their men, I said. Well, whoever they were, they had made a successful raid, Amunis replied, and just as he said that, we heard, below, the pounding of heavy feet. We ran out from the trail and dropped down in some thick brush, just in time to escape discovery. Without so much as a single glance in our direction, one after another a number of riders swiftly passed up the trail, quirting their sweating horses, and fierce was the expression of their faces. They came, were quickly gone, and Amunis and I let out deep breaths and sank down upon the ground to ease our bodies.

'Not Ku'te-nai men,' I said.

'No; they were taller, more slender than they are.'

'And better clothed; nearly all of them had wraps of buffalo leather. They are Kal'i-spels. Sahta said that they kill more of our buffalo than any of the other West-Siders; that they sneak out into our South Bear River [1] country to make their hunts.'

'Did you count those who just passed up?'

'No. I was watching their faces, looking for Skull Head among them,' I replied.

We agreed that they numbered all of twenty men. We moved farther out from the trail, made ourselves as comfortable as was possible, and by turns slept, by turns watched for the return of the riders. They appeared just before night, their horses so tired that they moved but slowly. And lo! three of the horses were carrying, each of them, two riders, and of these, two were wounded, were bloody, and were supported by the men behind them. So, somewhere up the trail, the war-party from the plains had fought this party of pursuers, wounded two, perhaps killed others, killed, anyhow, three of their horses. More than ever we were anxious to know who they were, these raiders from the plains. There was the chance that they were Running Fisher's and

[1] Musselshell River.

Owl Body's party, long delayed in this West-Side country, and just now homeward bound with a band of enemy horses — Kal'i-spel horses. The more Amunis and I thought about this and talked about it, the more we believed that the plains party were our long absent friends. And if so, what of Skull Head? Had they found him, killed him, before making a raid upon the horse herds of the Kal'i-spels? We were two worried youths as, when night came, we went on down that fork of Liar River, and not far in the rear of the slow-moving riders with their wounded ones. We liked not traveling the wide, open trail in the bright shining of Night-Light. We proceeded very slowly, stopping often to look, to listen. And often I put my hand upon the necklace that I wore and prayed to the buffalo stones, and to the Seven Persons above, to shield Amunis and me from the dangers of the night.

Not long after the middle of the night, we came to a fork of the trail that ran straight northward up a wide valley. There were only faint, old tracks of horses in it, so we kept on in the main trail, and later on, we forded a large creek running from the north valley into the river. Then, still later — near morning it

was — we came to another fork of the trail, also running north. At once we recognized it, and knew that we had followed it when on our previous quest of Skull Head in this all but meatless country. It ran from this point on Liar River to Sacred Dancing Lake, but a little way up the wide, north valley. As there were no fresh horse tracks in this branch trail, we reasoned that there was no encampment of Ku'te-nais or Kal'i-spels at Sacred Dancing Lake, and we so continued on down the Liar River trail, or, as we called it, Running Eagle's Trail. My thoughts were of that great warrior woman as we went on. In all the tribes of us, there had never been one like her. Brave, fearless, but cautious, she had, summer after summer, led Pi-ku'ni war-parties to raid the West-Side tribes; led them up the middle fork of our Two Medicine Lodges River, through the low pass under Backbone Mountain (Summit Mountain), and then down along a little West-Side creek to this Liar River, and along it to the camps of the enemy. Ku'te-nais and Kal'i-spels, River People, Blue Paint People, and Spokanes, all had had great fear of her. And at last, in an attack that she and her warriors had made upon a camp of Kal'i-spels,

she had fallen with an arrow through her breast. And now Amunis and I were following a party of this same tribe. I prayed that we might not meet a like ending at their hands.[1]

We were now, as we well knew, near the point where this fork of Liar River joined its much larger fork, coming down from the north, and there, where the two streams joined, we thought it likely that the Kal'i-spels were encamped. So was it that we now went on much faster, anxious to see that favorite camping ground of the West-Siders before day should be upon us. It was possible, as Amunis said, that we might find there not only the Kal'i-spels, but the North Ku'te-nai tribe as well.

Day came before we sighted the place, and I proposed that we take no risks of discovery by the enemy; that we turn off from the trail and go into hiding until night should come again. But Amunis made strong objection to that. We could not be far from the junction of the rivers, he said. Sun was not yet in sight, and we could safely go on for a time. Did I not remember that there were some bare cliffs on the

[1] For the story of this remarkable warrior woman, see *Running Eagle*, by J. W. Schultz. (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.)

mountain between the forks, from which we could get a complete view of any camp that might be there where the rivers met? Well, we should go on to the cliffs, and so not waste the day by useless hiding here beside the trail. He was so urgent that I gave him his way about it, and again led on, almost on the run, intending to leave the trail as soon as we could sight the cliffs, and work up to them through the timber and thick underbrush in which stinging-leafed plants were more than plentiful.

So going, so fast that we were almost running, we ascended a very sharp little rise of the trail, and came face to face with seven men on foot! Seven hunters, early out from their camp in quest of meat in their all but meatless country! Ha! What a surprise to us, and to them! My gun was in its case, Amunis's bow in its case; likewise the weapons of the others. As I was stripping off my gun-case, and at the same time about to turn and run, one of the seven, a man of many winters, pointed to my necklace, raising his hand in the peace sign, at the same time shouting to me: 'Sahta! Sahta!' Then, after hurriedly saying something to his companions, he again pointed to my necklace, again shouted 'Sahta! Sahta!'

and signed to me: 'My cousin Sahta! His necklace, that you have!'

'Sahta gave me this necklace. He is my mother's cousin, too,' I made out to sign back, almost trembling though I was; terribly afraid of that old man's companions, angrily staring at us, their weapons now ready for use. So was my gun. I was thinking that I must not die before shooting at the first one of the seven who attempted to attack us.

But now the old man was signing to me again: 'You and I are relatives. You are one of my Pi-ku'ni relatives. We are friends ——'

There he was stopped by two of his companions, two who angrily spoke to him; insisting, doubtless, that they should right there kill us. But the old man turned upon them, fiercely answered them; not loudly, though. More was it a deep growling of his words. They shrank from him, from his angry, outthrust face, one of the two signing to him: 'Enough! Enough!' The old man then stepped quickly over between Amunis and me, and the six came on more slowly, went on past us, and we watched them until they disappeared up around a bend of the trail. The old man then signed to us: 'Come. We will go to my lodge. We will eat,

rest, have much talk together. Have not the least fear of my people: with me, you are fully safe.'

Down the trail we went, the old man in the lead and walking fast. The forks of the river were farther down than we had thought. Sun was well up in the blue when we arrived there, and entered the Kal'i-spel camp of about a hundred lodges. Hai! How the people stared at us as we followed our leader across the circle of them to his lodge, close to the river. Though small, it was a good buffalo-leather lodge, and well furnished. Two women were in it, the old man's women, and, as he spoke with them, Amunis said to me: 'We are to be questioned. What shall we say, how explain our presence here on this West-Side?'

'I will do the talking for us both, so that we may not get into any trouble,' I answered.

'Shall you mention Skull Head? — say that we came across in quest of him?'

'I don't know yet what I dare say. I think that we must be very careful about speaking of him.'

The old man had told his women about us; they were smiling as they hurried to prepare food for us.

I signed to him: 'I have often heard Sahta speak of his relative Kal'i-spel, a chief, his name Beaver Head ——'

'Me; my name,' the old man interrupted. 'I know who you are. I saw you, long ago, when you were very small, of very few winters. You are Bear Child. Your mother, Sahta's cousin, my cousin, too, is Slender Woman. Your father is a very powerful fighter; his name, Lone Man.'

'He fights no more! He is dead!'

'Ho!' the old man exclaimed, making the signs for surprise and sorrow.

'He was killed by the Ku'te-nais; by a Ku'te-nai whose face is like that of a man's skull,' I signed.

And at that, the old man and his women gave little cries of pity, and he signed: 'We know him, that Ku'te-nai! Cut Nose is his name. He is a man of terrible angers. His own people fear him. He is alone: no woman will set up a lodge with him ——'

'Now he has a woman!' I interrupted. 'He killed a Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki, named Cut Hand, and took his woman ——'

'Wait!' the old man signed me, spoke with his women, and then continued: 'The Ku'te-

nais are camped one day's ride to the north, at Big Beaver Lake.[1] Not long ago, some of them visited here. They told us that Cut Nose had returned from another of his raids across, and had related that, at your Inside Lakes, he had killed a Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki man. Now, see: if he had brought that man's woman home with him, surely our visitors would have told us about it. Surely they would have spoken of it; for that Cut Nose, after many winters, should at last have a woman would have been big news.'

'Then he killed her, too. He captured the woman, her little son saw him seize her. My mother and I have the little one; we are raising him,' I explained, and saw the two women shiver as though with cold. And one of them signed to me, 'Cut Nose, I hate him!'

The other woman signed: 'Glad would be my heart if he were dead!'

I looked at Amunis, and said to him: 'These three are our friends: we can trust them. I shall tell them why we have crossed the Backbone.'

'Yes; tell them fully.'

[1] Logging Lake, as it is on the Topographic Map of Glacier National Park.

I turned again to the old man and signed: 'I have to tell you something. I know that you will keep it hidden, you, and your women, too!'

'Yes! Yes!' they quickly answered.

So was it that I told of Skull Head's night-stabbings in the camp of the Kai'na, and in our camp, and our and others' long quest of him. I had not quite finished when we heard approaching footsteps, and the old man signed: 'Cease.'

A young woman entered, spoke to him, turned, and went out. He then signed: 'Two nights back, horses of this camp were taken by a party of men of your tribe. What do you know about it?'

'We saw not the horse-takers. We did see your men riding swiftly in pursuit, and saw them returning, two of them wounded,' I answered.

'One of the wounded is now dying, so said that woman who came in. So is it that my people are very angry at you Pi-ku'ni. Fear not. Here in my lodge, you are safe. I shall protect you.'

'How many were they, the Pi-ku'ni who took the horses?' Amunis asked.

little later said that the rider was going swiftly down it. I proposed that we go down to the other camp, to be there when the rider should arrive, and so learn at once the reason for his hurried return. My mother, who had been listening to our talk, was also eager to go. She put away the instrument and caught up with us.

We found White Wolf, the chief of the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki, at home, and, when we told him what we had seen, he was of our mind, that Cut Hand was in trouble on the mountain. He shouted out the news that we had brought and ordered his men to run in their horses and saddle them. Not many men were there at the time, the greater number of them having gone with our hunters in quest of the white buffalo.

The camp of the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki was at the edge of the river, about midway between the foot of Upper Inside Lake and the mouth of Divide Creek. We all gathered at the ford and anxiously awaited the coming of the rider. He presently burst from the quaking-aspen thicket across, his horse white-flecked with foamy sweat. The water showered up and fell like rain as he crossed the ford. He dropped

from his horse and stood before the chief, his eyes big like those of an owl, his body quivering as though he were freezing. With shaking hand he pointed to the mountain and, pantingly, jerkily, said to him, as we afterward learned: 'We entered that highest growth of timber, the one at this end of the mountain. I had stopped to eat some berries, and was well behind my father and mother. As they got down off their horses — my father was to go on ahead to shoot the bighorns — I heard a gunshot, and saw my father fall, and heard my mother scream. Then a man came running and seized my mother; as she fought him, I saw his face. He was that horrible-face Ku'te-nai, Cut Nose. Then he saw me, let go of my mother, and started toward me, drawing bow and arrows from the case at his side. My mother came running, too, shouting to me to hurry home; that I must live. As I went, I looked back: the last I saw of my mother, she was again struggling with that Cut Nose.'

At that, the Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki made terrible outcries of surprise and anger, and all that the chief said to us then was that the Ku'te-nai we called Skull Head had killed the boy's father and seized his mother. He couldn't under-

there all day. I am going after them. They are now very fat, the old males. If I make a killing, you shall have some of the meat.'

I put away the instrument, accompanied him to his camp, and he sent his son for his horses. When they were brought in, he told the boy and his mother to accompany him on the hunt. I watched them saddle up, mount, and ford the river, and then I went home.

Amunis came to visit with me, and when I told him that Cut Hand and his family had gone up onto Stone Head Mountain, after three bighorns that we had seen there, he said that it would be worth while to see our friend approach the animals. We got my mother to adjust the instrument, build a little pile of wood upon which we cripples could rest it, and then by turns kept the instrument upon the three animals, and upon the little open parks of the mountain slope, where we might get sight of the ascending hunter.

Sun traveled up and up through the blue, and was straight above us, when, at last, Amunis, who then had the instrument, cried out to me that he had discovered Cut Hand and his two followers: they had just entered the upper one of the parks, the one that was

separated by a belt of heavy timber from the slide-rock slope upon which the bighorns were lying. And then a little later: 'They have just gone up into the timber. From its upper edge, Cut Hand can easily shoot one of the animals. I will now watch them.'

Came to us, presently, from that far-up mountain-side, the faint boom of a gun, and then Amunis said to me: 'Ha! The three bighorns have got up from their beds . . . are walking off toward the other end of the mountain . . . they have stopped and are looking back . . . now they are again moving on . . . not much frightened. Why, Cut Hand did not shoot at them; he must have shot at an elk or a deer in the timber.'

'Strange that he would do that when he so much wanted bighorn meat,' I remarked.

'Ha! One of the three is in the upper park, riding swiftly down it. A small rider; the boy, I think. There! He has gone into the timber below the park.'

'Perhaps his father is in trouble up there. Maybe he is injured; by a real-bear, or something of that kind,' I said.

Amunis turned the far-seeing instrument upon the lower one of the little parks, and a

CHAPTER VIII

SKULL HEAD AGAIN APPEARS

SEE now, my friend, what my possession of my father's far-seeing instrument brought to pass. My torn and broken shoulder confined me to camp. Little Dog and his large following of our hunters continued their search for the white buffalo cow that had been seen on a fork of Little River, and I was grieved that I could not be with them. Also, there was talk of forming a large war-party to go on a raid against the Ku'te-nais, and I feared that my shoulder would not heal in time for me to join it. White Wolf and his little tribe of Sak-sis' O-ki-tu'ki, whom Amunis and I had met on Fought-the-Ku'te-nais River, were encamped quite near us, and Amunis and I frequently visited them. With one, Cut Hand, a man of maybe forty winters, who spoke our language well, we became very friendly. He told us stories so funny that for the time he made us forget our painful wounds. He came to visit me, one morning, and noticed the far-seeing instrument, suspended above my couch.

'Ha! Let me look through it, at the near mountains,' he said. 'I am tired of buffalo meat. I want some fat bighorn meat for a change. If I can see any of the animals, I will try to kill one of them.'

We went outside, sat down, and he adjusted the instrument, looked carefully at Top-is-Flat Mountain, and the rocky slopes under its high cliffs. After a long time, he said that he could see none of the animals there, and turned the instrument upon Stone Head Mountain.[1]

'Ha! I see three bighorns!' he soon exclaimed. 'Three very large males at the right end of the mountain; on the steep slide-rock just below the cliff. Take you a look at them.'

He handed me the instrument. I got behind him, and with my left hand rested it upon his shoulder, and soon found the animals. As I watched, one of them pawed a resting-place in the small rocks of the slope and lay down in it. Then Cut Hand again took the instrument, but soon gave it back to me. 'All three are now lying down,' he said. 'They will remain

[1] On the map, Eagle Shot Mountain. For the Blackfeet and the Ku'te-nai names for this mountain, and all other topographical features of Glacier National Park, and tribal legends pertaining to them, see *Signposts of Adventure*. (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.)

A BLANKET-WRAPPED MAN ENTERED WITH GUN IN HAND

Lake and between Fighting Bears Lakes, across Swift-Running Creek; then up the timbered ridge, past the north cliff of Flat-Top Mountain, and thence down to our camp at the foot of Upper Inside Lake. Night had long since come when we arrived there, but the lodges of the great circle were still glowing, our people still sitting around their little fires. They heard the tramp of our horses, and came rushing out to greet us, eagerly asking what news we had for them. That Skull Head — had we seen him, killed him? a hundred voices asked.

Crying, laughing, giving praise to Sun for answering her prayers for my safe return to her, my mother eased me down from my horse, supported me to my couch in our big and comfortable lodge; and while she bathed and greased and rebandaged my wound, and then set before me good food, I told her all that I had seen and done during my quest of Skull Head. Our relatives and some friends had come in, and sat silently, solemnly listening; and here and there in the camp, hurting our ears, saddening our hearts, we heard the wailings of newly made widows and their children. Said my mother, when I ended my tale: 'Oh, this constant war between us and the Ku'te-

As we went hurrying back up the trail, the shouts of the enemy upon the cliff came but dimly to my ears.

We did not stop until we were well down upon our slope of the great Backbone. The bodies of Yellow Kidney and Weasel Eyes had been brought along, and were buried well off the trail, the while the wounded were cared for, Running Fisher himself bandaging my torn and broken shoulder. He was, as were we all, very sad over our loss of three good friends. Again and again he said to us: 'It is my fault that they are gone. I should have known better than attempt to follow closely to attack West-Siders in this country of high cliffs and narrow trails. We should have waited for some nights; given them time to settle in one of their far-down, timbered valleys, and then crossed, on foot, not with horses, to make a night attack upon their camp.'

'Yes,' some one at last replied. 'That we will do, later on. But now, what?'

'Homeward with our wounded. Later on, a raid upon this tribe of the West-Siders, by way of Cutbank River Trail across,' Running Fisher replied.

We went on. Down past Jealous Women's

down to the edge of another cliff. Back the way we had come there was no place where we could climb in order to see the top of the cliff; and, because of the sharp bend of it, we could not see the far end of its high wall; it might be that, somewhere there, ascent of it was possible.

Said Running Fisher, after a time: 'Before going on, we must learn if the enemy really are up on the cliff.'

At that, a number of men spoke up, offering to go on and try to find a place from which they could see the top of it. But at that, the man who had halted us, a young man of our Fat Roasters Clan, named Three Feathers, shouted that that must be his privilege; that he alone had the right to do this scouting for us; and Running Fisher replied that he should have his way about it. So Three Feathers got down off his horse, ran past the line of us, and then more slowly went on along the trail, we all closely watching him. As he neared the sharp bend of the cliff and the trail, he moved on still more slowly, a step at a time, gun held in readiness for quick use. At last he arrived at the bend, began leaning out, peering around it. Suddenly raised the gun and fired, and at

the same time we heard a number of shots by enemies that the bend hid from us. We saw Three Feathers whirl around, nearly fall, then start limping toward us. And at that, many of the Ku'te-nais, all of forty or fifty, appeared upon the edge of the cliff, some of them showering rocks down upon Three Feathers, others shooting at us with their guns and bows.

We heard Three Feathers shout to us: 'You cannot go on! They have built a high rock barricade across the trail. There are many behind it!' And then, from above, a big rock came down upon his shoulder; he fell, rolled down the steep and narrow slope, and off the straight drop of the great cliff at its lower edge. So went to the Sandhills [1] the shadow of Three Feathers, that good and brave young man.

Glad and loud were the shouts of the Ku'te-nais at the passing of Three Feathers. We were returning their fire, but they had great advantage of us. Up on that high cliff, they

[1] Spat'si-ko — Sandhills. A dreary waste of sand dunes near the Canadian line, northeast of Fort Benton, Montana, the abode of the Blackfeet dead. Their shadows — souls — there live in shadow lodges; hunt and kill shadow buffalo; cook shadow meat upon shadow fires; fires that give out light, but no heat: a dreary mockery of their life in the flesh, by no means the 'happy hunting ground,' as pictured by various white recorders of Indian beliefs.

and Cutbank River. So he — Running Fisher — had come on with all who could be spared from camp, only seventy-three men.

'Ha! Only seventy-three — with us, seventy-six. We are not many to pursue these Ku'te-nais, their fighters more than a hundred men,' said Owl Body.

'Yet must we do so, do our best to kill that Skull Head; make them pay for crossing over into our buffalo country,' Running Fisher replied, and to that all there shouted their agreement.

As we began falling into line upon the trail, I asked Running Fisher about my mother. She was well, he said, and was constantly praying for me; that I might safely return to her and with the scalp of Skull Head. Also, he told us that the raid Little Dog had led against the Liars, in our Sweetgrass Hills country, had not been successful. Upon arriving there, it had been found that the Liars had fled northward, all of five days before; and with that much start, it had been thought impossible to overtake them before they could regain their muskeg country, and the great body of their kind remaining there.

We pushed on. Up and up the trail down

which Owl Body, Amunis, and I had followed the Ku'te-nais. The night was so dark, the trail so winding, and in places so steep that we could not make our horses go faster than a jogging trot. We knew of old the ways of the Ku'te-nai and other West-Side tribes when, fearing pursuit by us, they fled back into their poor country. So was it that when day came, and we were still quite a little way below the summit of the Backbone, we proceeded more slowly, frequently pausing to look for any signs that might betray the enemy, lying in wait in some favorable place to entrap us. But look as we would, we could see nothing to arouse suspicion of their presence. We went on and on up the rocky trail; into the gap in the Backbone through which it ran, and began the descent of the West-Side slope, and still no least sign of the enemy. Then, suddenly, one of the men in the rear of our line shouted to us to halt: 'Up there on that cliff ahead of us! Look closely at it,' he said. 'I am sure that I saw there the head of a man as he looked down at us and then drew back.'

Look as we would, we could see only the bare edge of the cliff. The trail ran close under it, along a steep slope of fine rocks, running

Escape of Skull Head

We had rested so well during the day that we were not sleepy. We watched the Seven Persons in the northern sky, as they marked the passing of the night, and anxiously we listened for the coming of our warriors. Again and again we said to one another that it was not possible they were not coming. Surely, the Ku'te-nai hunters had met and fought some of our people, down below, and knew that they would be pursued by the whole force of our tribe, else why had they come hurrying back without so much as a single buffalo hide and load of meat, and then the whole camp of them fled on, leaving, in their haste, some of their horses, even lodges, food, and valuable furs? Up the valley and down it, and upon the near slopes of the mountains, wolves howled, coyotes yelped, foxes hoarsely gave their snuffling barks, owls hooted. A bear, passing so near that we got the strong odor of him, frightened our horses, and we had much trouble in quieting them.

The Seven Persons marked the middle of the night when, at last, we heard the thudding of heavy feet upon the trail below. We sprang up, tossed the food sacks and bundle of furs out into the brush, and got hold of our horses.

On and on came the riders, and, when their leader was close to us, Owl Body cried: 'Pi-ku'ni! At last you are here!'

'Ha! And who are you? You are Owl Body?' the leader asked.

Well we knew that voice: he was not our war chief, Little Dog; he was Running Fisher, of my own clan, the Small Robes, and a good warrior.

'Yes! And here with me are Bear Child and Amunis,' Owl Body replied.

At that, with exclamations of surprise, the party came crowding up around us, eagerly asking what news we had for them. Running Fisher ordered them to be still; to let him and us do the talking. So was it that we first gave our news of the enemy, of their sudden flight from this place, Skull Head one of them. Running Fisher then said that a few of our men, out after buffalo, had discovered the Ku'te-nai hunting party below the Inside Lakes, killed four of them, and then had hurried home to call out all of our fighting men; but not many were there, for Little Dog, with many members of the All Friends Bands, had gone in quest of a white buffalo that had been seen well down on the plain between Little River

very place for our purpose. With our knives we quickly cleared sitting places in it, only a step from its outer edge, and a few steps to the right of the trail. Then, awaiting the coming of our enemies, we decided just how we should attack them: not until they were very close to us, and then, because he had killed my father, I was to shoot Skull Head and Amunis was to try to kill his two followers.

We thought that they might soon appear, but the night wore on and on, and they did not come. I lifted my necklace, prayed the buffalo stones and the Seven Persons to give us their powerful aid, to ask Sun to help us put an end to Skull Head, right there in the trail before us.

Morning came. Were my prayers to be without result? My heart was low; and it went still lower when Amunis said that, perhaps, our enemies had taken some other trail across the great Backbone.

A few elk were grazing in the upper end of the prairie. They suddenly lifted their heads and ran down into the timber bordering the creek. Our hearts rose. Then appeared our three enemies, and we were glad! Glad! 'O Sun! O powerful Above One! Help us now!

Give us to wipe out completely these approaching three!' I prayed.

They were coming on abreast, each in one of the paths of the big trail, and by the blanket that he wore, we knew that the center man was Skull Head. I cocked my gun, Amunis gripped two arrows in his teeth, fitted another one to his bow. I kept saying to myself: 'I must not tremble! I must take careful aim, straight at Skull Head's breast.'

And on and on came the three, walking without haste, talking to one another, and we saw that their weapons were not in readiness for use: the gun that Skull Head carried, my father's gun, was in its case, and the bows of the other two were in the cases at their backs. Amunis was close at my left side. I whispered to him that he should shoot first, the man on the left of Skull Head, and he nodded that he heard me.

Nearer and nearer came the three, and when they were no more than ten steps from us, I fired at Skull Head's breast, and Amunis shot his man right in the heart. But as I fired, Skull Head stumbled slightly and my bullet broke his right arm, causing him to drop his gun. He yelled as he spun around and with the other

man ran out upon the prairies, the unwounded one getting out his bow and arrows; but, before he could use his weapon, Amunis shot him fair in his back and he fell. I was a little way behind Amunis, as I had paused to take up the dropped gun, my father's gun, and strip off its case.

As Amunis kept on after Skull Head, I shouted, 'Don't shoot him! He is mine!'

'Yes! Yours! Hurry!' he answered.

Skull Head, badly wounded, could not run fast. As we were close upon him, he stopped and turned about, with his left hand making the peace sign, and then the signs for pity, while from his lipless mouth came hissing and mumblings that hurt our ears.

'No! Killer of my father! Killer of my people! Stealer of women! Now I kill you,' I signed. And with quick aim with my father's gun, I shot him in his heart. He fell dead.

'Kyi! Hai! We have done it!' shouted Amunis.

'Yes! We have completed our long quest,' I answered. And then shouting the victory song, we danced around the body of our enemy, terrible no more. I took one of his scalp-locks and his knife, my father's powder-

horn and bullet-pouch which he wore. Amunis then took the weapons and the scalps of the two that he had killed, and, giving the bodies of the three to Sun, we went on down the trail a little way, and stopped for a long rest.[1]

Kyi! Three days later, my friend, near set of Sun, we neared the great camp of our people, at the foot of Upper Inside Lake. We stopped, painted ourselves with sacred red, and then, with the weapons and the scalps of our enemies in hand and singing the victory song, we entered the circle of the lodges. A man first to greet us asked what we had done. We answered, and he in turn shouted our reply, that we had killed Skull Head and two others. Hai! How the people crowded around us then, shouting over and over our names, giving us praise for our great success. It was a long time before my crying, laughing mother succeeded in getting us into her lodge, to rest, to eat good food. And there was my new, almost-brother, little Apauk, to welcome us, also to rejoice, when I told him that the killer of his father and

[1] Ot-sit' Ini'ta Sta-how' To-kan' (Where Was Killed Skull Head) is the little prairie close back of Slippery Bill's house, at Summit Station, on the Great Northern Railway.

mother was no more. And there came hurrying in to us Running Fisher and Owl Body, to hear our tale, and to tell us how they had failed even to see Skull Head, though they had watched for him in his camp, and on the trails running from it, for many days. They told also how, owing to a dreadful vision that one of them had had, they had given up all hope of finding him and had come home, upon their way taking a fine band of horses from the Kal'i-spels. Later in the evening, we were called to Big Lake's lodge, there to tell him and Little Dog, and all the other great ones, the full story of our long quest of Skull Head. And when we had finished, great was the praise that they gave us. Hai! Pleasant was it in our ears.

On the following morning, Amunis and I gave the scalps that we had taken to the widows and other relatives of the Pi-ku'ni men that Skull Head had killed, and they all painted black their faces and hands, elevated the scalps on sticks, and went about here and there in camp, before the lodge of every mourner, and slowly danced and sang the slow, sad songs of revenge fulfilled.

That very day, too, my mother began to

make strong talk for a peace party to go to the West-Siders with a pipe and tobacco. There was objection to this on the part of a few of our chiefs and leading warriors, but their women pleaded with them, and they were finally won over to giving their consent. So was it that Big Lake and Little Dog named my mother as the bearer of the peace pipe, and named those who were to accompany her: only Sahta and his woman; the Sun priest, Painted Rock, and his woman; Amunis and I. Also, our chiefs told my mother what to say to the West-Side chiefs, if they accepted the pipe: she was to invite them and their people to meet our tribe at Two Medicine Lodges Lake, in the following moon, Falling Leaves Moon, and then to accompany us on our winter hunt.

So was it that we all moved down to that lake, and from there, our little party went over-across by way of Running Eagle's Trail. We found the Kal'i-spel camp right where Amunis and I had left it. We entered it, my mother in the lead, her face and hands, her clothing and her horse, painted with sacred red, and in her raised hand was the peace pipe. The people rushed from their lodges to see us. They knew at once the object of our coming,

and our good friend, Beaver Head, almost crying, invited us into his lodge. He gladly accepted the pipe, for himself and for his tribe; gladly replied that he would make peace with our chiefs at our sacred lake, at the time that they had named. Looking then at me, he asked, through Sahta: 'And you, my almost-son, what of Cut Nose?'

'Dead! His two men also,' I signed. Then Sahta told him just how and where Amunis and I had ended their trails.

'Good!' said he. 'It is good that you killed that terrible Cut Nose. Not so good that you killed also his two followers.'

Whereupon, my mother, having told him of her intention to carry the peace pipe on to the Ku'te-nais, he strongly advised her not to do so. That tribe would be glad when they learned of the killing of Skull Head, and very angry over the killing of his two followers, and there were several Ku'te-nais right then visiting in his camp, who would quickly return to their tribe with the news of it. He advised that my mother send a messenger to the Ku'te-nai chiefs, and the chiefs of the River People, to say that the Pi-ku'ni chiefs invited them and their people to come over-across to Two

Medicine Lodges Lake, there to make a great peace with them, and afterward to join them in the winter hunt.

My mother slept on that, and on the following morning, she accepted his advice. Beaver Head then selected two young men to be her messengers to the tribes, and we saddled up, and, beginning our homeward journey, we arrived in camp on the third day.

Hai! In the following moon came over-across the Kal'i-spels, the Ku'te-nais, the River People, and a number of lodges of Blue Paint People, and there, at our sacred lake, made peace with us. It was a time of great happiness to us all. It was always afterward spoken of as Slender Woman's Peace.

Did it last? Yes, for a number of winters. And then some of our young men, disobeying our chiefs, went over-across and raided the West-Siders, and again it was war between them and us.

Kyi! So ends my tale.

THE END

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09901 079 3

WATERTON
LAKES
NAT.
PARK
Waterton Lakes
NORTH KUTENAI CAMP
Kintla Lakes
CONTINENTAL
Crossley L.
G L A C I E R
North Fork
KUTENAI CAMP
FIGHT WITH KUTENAI
SWIFT CURRENT PASS
MT. ALLEN
Logging L.
N A T I O N A L
Flathead
RED EAGLE
DIVIDE
Radnor
GREAT NOTHERN RY.
Olney
McDONALD
SACRED DANCING LAKE CAMP
BELTON HILLS
KALISPELL CAMP
River
Silvertip
BELTON
Whitefish L
Grizzly
Red Eagle
Whitefish
Citadel
Hidden Lake
Columbia Falls
Pinnacle
Walton
MAP SHOWING TRAIL OF BEAR CHILD
IN SEARCH OF SKULL HEAD

Milk River
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
St. Mary River
N. Fk.
Milk River
B L A C K F E E T
DIVIDE
S. Fk
LAKES
BAY
HUDSONS
PIKUNI CAMP
I N D I A N
PIKUNI CAMP
Cut Bank Cr.
Ft. Piegan
Sundance
Meriwether
Blackfoot
N. Fk.
S. Fk.
Kipp
R E S ' N.
Ft. Browning
Triple Divide
Two Medicine Lakes
Spotted Robe
PIKUNI CAMP
UNDER BULL MTN.
GLACIER PARK
Two Medicine River
ROCKY MTNS.
Bison
Rising Wolf
Cataract
Summit MARIAS PASS
Skyland
Blacktail
Badger Cr.
N
W
E
S
0
5
10
MILES

INDIAN STORIES

By

James Willard Schultz

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ, or Ap-i-kun-**i**, — to give him his Indian name, — went West in the '70's, joined a tribe of Blackfeet, and for years lived, hunted, and fought side by side with them. From these experiences he has drawn material for his books, which have been called 'the best of their kind ever written.'

In Enemy Country
Red Crow's Brother
A Son of the Navahos
William Jackson, Indian Scout
Questers of the Desert
Bird Woman
Plumed Snake Medicine
Sahtaki and I
The Danger Trail
The Gold Cache
Apauk, Caller of Buffalo
With the Indians in the Rockies
Sinopah, the Indian Boy
The Quest of the Fish-Dog Skin
On the Warpath
Lone Bull's Mistake
Running Eagle, the Warrior Girl
Rising Wolf, the White Blackfoot
In the Great Apache Forest
The Dreadful River Cave
The War-Trail Fort
Seizer of Eagles
The Trail of the Spanish Horse